

**FROM THE FRONTIER TO THE FRONT: IMAGINED COMMUNITY AND
THE SOUTHWESTERN ALBERTA GREAT WAR EXPERIENCE**

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Carol, without whom none of this would have been possible. Thanks Mom.

Abstract

As Canada joins other nations in observing a succession of First World War centenaries, the public narrative constructed over the past hundred years holds up the Great War, particularly the battle for Vimy Ridge, as a pivotal point in Canadian history that forged our national identity. This thesis sets aside this romanticised and idealised construct, focusing upon the regional and cultural variations specific to Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta.

While much work has been done on the French-English divide, comparatively few microstudies have examined the distinctive experiences and regional nuances of other communities within this vast and diverse nation. This work examines the settlement processes and previous martial and militia experiences of Southwestern Alberta, in an effort to explain the uniqueness of the local Great War experience. Included in this analysis are themes related to propaganda and censorship, recruitment and enlistment, and the construction of memory and meaning through commemoration.

Acknowledgements

As the University of Lethbridge moves ever closer to its fiftieth anniversary, it is important to acknowledge that a comparatively young institution has grown into a vibrant, first-rate centre for liberal education. As one of more than 40,000 University of Lethbridge alumni, I would like to express my gratitude to the administration, faculty, and support staff who do so much to make the experience meaningful and memorable to their students. Having such a positive experience in my undergraduate studies greatly influenced my choice to return as a graduate student.

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Table of Contents:

Chapter 1: “Boer War Imaginings”16
Chapter 2: “Militia Imaginings”56
Chapter 3: “Great War Imaginings: Pride, Prejudice, and Propaganda”85
Chapter 4: “Great War Imaginings: A Place For Everyone”115
Chapter 5: “Great War Imaginings: Everyone in their Place”145
Chapter 6: “Ghostly Imaginings”175
Conclusion:202
Works Cited:205

Introduction

This description of the first of many recruiting drives held in Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta during the years of the First World War demonstrates the volume and diversity of the volunteers who came forward: “The first parade, which was held outside the old Armoury in Lethbridge, revealed a motley crew. All classes were represented; bookkeepers and farmers; cow-punchers and merchants; lumberjacks and miners; from the office, the prairie, the bush and the mine they came; all eager to do their share in the big bid for freedom; for democracy; for very civilization.”¹ During the course of the war, the small city of Lethbridge raised three active artillery batteries, a reserve artillery battery, and an infantry battalion, while hundreds of men from the community and surrounding area volunteered for service with numerous other Canadian and British military units. While the contributions of these ‘citizen soldiers’ are well documented, little is known as to who these men were and what motivated them to enlist.

Historians examining the greater Canadian First World War experience have theorised that the main motivators for signing up were steady employment, opportunity for travel and adventure, as well as strong notions of patriotism, nationalism, duty, and honour. There were of course regional and cultural variations in the First World War experience. Much work has been done in terms of comparing the French- and English-Canadian perspectives on war-related issues, but comparatively less attention has been given to the examination of regional responses to war.² This thesis focuses on the unique

¹ J.C.K. MacKay, *The Diary of the 20th Battery CFA* (Lethbridge: 1938), 2.

² Some examples of works examining regional responses to war include Serge Durlinger’s *Fighting From Home: The Second World War in Verdun, Quebec*, James Pistula’s *For All We Have and Are: Regina and the Experiences of the Great War*, and Jim Blanchard’s *Winnipeg’s Great War: A City Comes of Age*.

experience of Southwestern Alberta, specifically, Lethbridge, which had grown to be the economic and social hub of the region.

Historian Desmond Morton, who has written extensively on nearly every facet of Canada's role in the First World War, argues that: "There are few aspects of Canadian society that have not been shaped by the wars, from politics to family, from the role of government to the formation of social policy, from the status of women to French-English relations."³ In his ground-breaking work, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson examines the evolution of nationalism over the past three centuries, noting that "nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time."⁴ Generations of Canadians have been convinced that their national identity was forged by the victory at Vimy Ridge. While Vimy Ridge is certainly symbolically important, many aspects of the Canadian First World War experience combined to provide a foundation for the developing 'nation-ness.' Anderson posits that nationalism is an 'imagined community' and that it is inherently limited and sovereign.⁵ He further asserts that the act of going to war provides the most unifying force that a nation can experience. In his words, "Ultimately it is this fraternity (nationalism) that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly die for such limited imaginings. These deaths bring us abruptly face to face with the central problem posed by nationalism: what makes the shrunken imaginings of recent history generate such colossal sacrifices?"⁶

³ Tim Cook, *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), 3.

⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006), 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

While many connections can be made between nationalism and war, the notion of imagined community allows us to gain a more nuanced understanding of what might motivate a complex and disparate group of individual citizens to collectively embrace an official identity that was often at odds with their distinct community identities.⁷ Although the response of the citizens of Lethbridge and area to the First World War reflected the traditional values of Anglo-Eastern and -Central Canada and that of the larger British Empire, the community identities were far more varied and complex. In short, not everyone who volunteered did so for the ‘standard’ reasons, at least not in terms of their personal connectedness to nationalism and nation-ness. What they did share was what Anderson described as a sense of imagined community, every bit as powerful and compelling in its regional ties as it was on the national scale. Anderson identified several unifying elements including capitalism, language, print media, and education; these factors will be used to deconstruct the regional imagined community as it developed in Lethbridge prior to the First World War.⁸ The conclusions drawn from this deconstruction will then be utilised in reconstructing the imagined community present in the region during the years of the First World War, while recognizing the influence of official identity and various community identities and how each was shaped and reflected by the greater war experience.

⁷ In the context of this thesis, imagined community describes a greater sense of belonging and citizenship that is willingly ascribed to by the majority of citizens. Although Anderson speaks to the concept of a national imagined community, this work speaks primarily of regional imagined communities. Official identity refers to the collective identity of a group of citizens that is generally created and imposed upon them by those in power, such as government, business, the education system, and the media. Community identities refers to any collective or individual sub-groups within a community that share a common identity, usually different from that of the imposed official identity, but often still remaining a part of the imagined community. Members of these groups can often be linked by social, religious, economic, or class-based constructs.

⁸ Anderson’s work on imagined community focused primarily upon 19th century Western Europe and their colonial holdings in the Americas and Asia. With respect to colonies, much of his analysis centred on twentieth-century experiences.

This thesis examines Lethbridge's early military presence, particularly the years of the First World War, using a multidisciplinary approach. 'Official identity' will refer to that which is imposed upon the citizens of the community by those in positions of power or authority within the community, including the government, business, media, and even the Empire itself. A secondary related term, 'community identities,' will provide a more realistic portrayal of the diversity of opinion, beliefs, culture, religion, and values that exist within the community and may have been in opposition to the official identity. Elements of urban anthropology and urban sociology will be useful in defining and understanding both official identity and community identities. These methods can also help in understanding how the social and cultural fabrics of the community developed and how social stratification affected issues relating to the relationship between the military and the community of Lethbridge during the First World War.

In this study of identity, specific traits of a city-type community will be considered, including social, economic, and political processes, as well as migration, kinship, urbanism, and social stratification. These concepts will be used to explain the pre-war official identity and community identities and how each was expressed and subsequently evolved, particularly during the First World War. Evidence of the more dominant, imposed official identity will be gathered through a variety of sources, including official documents, speeches, media accounts, memoirs, and diaries. It is more difficult to provide evidence of community identities, as members of the community who did not embrace the official identity had few ways to articulate their views, and so little remains in the historical record, particularly as it relates to the citizens of Lethbridge. In an effort to overcome the lack of sources pertaining to the identities of these individuals

or groups of individuals, the primary source materials listed above will be closely examined for evidence pertaining to their opinions, activities, and experiences.

This thesis contains six chapters. In the first chapter, the formative years of the city will be briefly examined, specifically as a means to explain the demographic foundation of Lethbridge directly prior to the turn-of-the-century. The majority of the first chapter will focus upon the city's South African (Boer) War experience from 1899-1902, which is important because this experience is directly linked to the formation of a permanent militia presence in 1908. In addition, the Boer War was the community's first opportunity to send men to a foreign conflict and subsequently welcome their veterans home. The experiences of these men, their families, and the community at large are useful in terms of understanding the foundation of the military presence and participation in the First World War in the decade that followed.

The second chapter will briefly examine the demographics of the city in 1908, when the militia was established. It will explain how and why Lethbridge was selected for the first militia artillery battery west of Winnipeg. Along with the establishment of the military presence, the city experienced a concurrent rapid growth and a variety of social, cultural, economic, and political changes. It was during this period that the imposed 'official identity' was solidified and many of the diverse community identities emerged. The latter portions of this chapter will focus upon the history of the 25th Field Battery, examining who joined the unit and the evolution of their place within the community until they were disbanded in 1914 at the outbreak of the First World War.

Chapters 3-5 will focus solely upon the war years of 1914-1918, beginning with an examination of the events of August 1914. They will continue with an in-depth demographic analysis of the four artillery units raised in the city, as compared to that of

the local infantry battalion. This will be further contextualized with the national data available from Desmond Morton's *When Your Number's Up* and Tim Cook's *At The Sharp End*. Other topics discussed include the reinforcement of the imposed official identity through the media and personal accounts, and how this identity was reflected in the military presence, including recruiting tactics, propaganda, and advertising. Non-conforming community identities will be explored in terms of how various subsets of society responded to the war especially to enlistment and service, as well as their place within the larger imagined community. Much of the analysis relating to community identities will be provided through anecdotal materials regarding specific incidences or individuals, as related primarily through letters, memoirs, media accounts, and official documents.⁹

The final chapter will provide an examination of the immediate post-war years, centred upon the themes of meaning, memory, and myth. Specific local commemorations will be analysed in terms of how they reflected the imagined wartime community and incorporated elements of official identity.

This work is a microhistory.¹⁰ Although today there is a real trend for historians in certain fields of study, including social and military history, to take a microhistorical approach, it is a relatively new field. The prefix *micro*, which implies a small scale, has lead to some misconceptions and criticism that microhistory was unscholarly. Terms like *local history*, *petite history*, and *anecdotal history* have been wrongfully applied to this

⁹ These materials were sourced mainly through newspaper archives, but also through official personnel records, letter anthologies, and family collections.

¹⁰ The term *microhistory* is first known to have appeared in 1959 and was used by George R. Stewart, a professor at University of California - Berkeley to describe his work on the toponymy of the United States. Nearly a decade later, Luiz Gonzalez used the Spanish term *microhistoria* to describe his research work in *Pueblo en vilo: Microhistoria de San Jose de Gracia*, which focused on the history of a small, obscure Mexican village over four centuries.

approach. Unfortunately, influential members of the Annales School used the term *histoire événementielle* to describe microhistory as just a study of events. Fernand Braudel argued that *histoire événementielle* focused solely on events and tended to elevate chosen protagonists to the forefront of history.¹¹ However, Braudel later reconsidered his initial dismissal of microhistory and believed that it should be reassessed, as the approach could have some scientific value if it were properly conducted.¹² Although this work is unapologetically a microhistory, it is not event or hero-centric, but rather focuses upon the collective experience of Lethbridge, placing it within the national context. After deconstructing the greater Canadian military narrative, this thesis will then focus upon reconstructing the *microexperience* and will examine the impact of this on the development of official identity and community identities.

Tim Cook's *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* has been instrumental in assessing the greater Canadian military historiography, identifying gaps in the literature, and guiding the development of this thesis. Cook asserts that there are three distinct generations of Canadian military historians and the development of this thesis has been influenced by the contributions of each.¹³ As this work is rooted in socio-military history, more emphasis will be placed on the third generation Canadian military historians and their works, however, it is important to

¹¹ Fernand Braudel, "Histoire et sociologie," in *Traité de sociologie*, ed. Georges Gurvitch (Paris: PUF, 1960), 92.

¹² See section entitled "Fait divers, fait d'histoire" in *Annales: Économies sociétés, civilisations* 38 (July-August, 1983) for a retrospective account of Braudel's change of opinion regarding the utilization of microhistory or *histoire événementielle*. The complete text can be found on pg 917.

¹³ The historiographic analysis section will be revisited upon the completion of the body of the thesis and will be refined and clarified as to the importance of each generation in shaping our notions of the official identity of Canadian First World War servicepersons, as well as more specifically placing this thesis within the greater Canadian military historiography.

acknowledge that their contributions would not be possible without the foundations laid by the preceding two generations.

The first generation historians gathered and preserved much of the primary source material and raw data needed to deconstruct and reconstruct our notions of official identity during the First World War. Prominent among these official Canadian historians and archivists of the two world wars were Max Aitken (later Lord Beaverbrook), A.F. Duguid, C.P. Stacey, and G.W.L. Nicholson. In terms of this research, there is a similar constructive task in that several years have been spent collecting primary source accounts such as letters, diaries, newspaper articles, and military records. Each source has then been assessed for its relevance, accuracy, and impact, regarding issues of imagined community and the development of official identity and community identities. As G.W.L. Nicholson, author of the official Canadian First World War history noted, the problem with Canadian military history is not a lack of sources, but rather in choosing which materials to utilize.¹⁴ Secondly, the work of the first generation historians and archivists was crucial to the development of this thesis for the simple reason that without their work in the collection and archiving of the primary source materials, especially the more obscure accounts from specific military units through war diaries, nominal rolls, and casualty reports, it would not be possible to research anything but the most broad and general accounts of operational success or failure.

The second group of Canadian military historians were in fact a bridge-generation, who with the exception of J.L. Granatstein, had worked for C.P. Stacey in the Historical Section of the Department of National Defence, were not official historians, but rather the

¹⁴ Library and Archives Canada, MG31, G19, G.W.L. Nicholson papers, v.6, The Writing of an Official History, speech, 26 October 1956.

first scholars who had access to the collections. These collections had previously been restricted for reasons of national security and protection of the privacy of those individuals involved. In addition to Granatstein, this generation includes Desmond Morton, whose work, like Granatstein's, speaks to the greater Canadian experience rather than the many regional, social, and cultural nuances that are the focus of this thesis. The second generation historians deconstructed the works of the official historians and archivists and reconstructed narratives usually focused on the national scale. As Cook maintains, "each generation is shaped by the ongoing historical work of its predecessors."¹⁵

The third generation of historians is the most influential in terms of the theoretical framework of this thesis, many of whom have put aside the broad, panoramic studies of Canadian military history, in an effort to focus upon what Cook termed "micro-studies of various aspects in order to piece together complex disparate events of the past."¹⁶ This generation includes such prominent historians such as Jeff Keshen, Jonathan Vance, and Robert Rutherford, whose works have heavily influenced the theoretical framework and direction of this thesis. As mentioned previously, Tim Cook's *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars*, has been an invaluable source in understanding the evolution of Canadian military historiography and assessing the field's potential gaps. His two volumes of First World War history, *At the Sharp End: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1914-1916* and *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1917-1918*; have been useful for two key reasons. In these works, Cook provides up-to-date compendiums of practically every aspect of the Canadian First World

¹⁵ Cook, *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars*, 8.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 7.

War experience. His skillful use of letters, diaries, memoirs, and interviews combine seamlessly with the more traditional historic narrative to provide a more ‘lived experience’ account of Canadians’ participation in the First World War. Although Cook does not speak directly to the concept of imagined community, many of Anderson’s proposed elements are evident in Cook’s analysis. The style and content of this thesis has been influenced both directly and indirectly by the entire body of Cook’s writings on the First World War.

Another third generation historian whose work, particularly in the area of memory and commemoration, has directly influenced this thesis is Jonathan Vance. Vance’s book, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*, speaks to the deliberate manipulation of the public psyche during the First World War. Vance argues that the public memory of the war was controlled by a constructed ‘myth,’ which distracted the Canadian public from the horrors of war and the actions of the government and the military establishment, who in the end, sent thousands of men to their deaths.¹⁷ His work has influenced the portions of this thesis that explore memory, meaning, and commemoration in the regional context. Vance’s national scope is utilized as a means to contextualize the Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta experience in the immediate post-war years. Although Vance, like Cook, does not speak directly to Anderson’s notions of imagined community, many parallels are evident in their ideas of memory, myth, and nation building. According to Vance, the ‘myth’ that became a part of the building of post-war Canada, was heavily rooted in both religious and patriotic symbolism.¹⁸

¹⁷ Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 35.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Anderson also suggests that religious and patriotic symbols have been purposely combined in official war commemoration, especially cenotaphs and war memorials. He posits that these ‘ghostly imaginings,’ combined with religiosity and patriotism, are a powerful means by which myth and memory can be both constructed or organically developed.¹⁹ In this thesis, the idea of constructed myth will figure prominently throughout the body of the work, as will concepts of memory, meaning, and imagined community.

In 2002, Robert Rutherford completed a three city comparative case study work, which included Lethbridge, in an effort to highlight regional variations in the First World War experience. His ground-breaking efforts have encouraged other scholars to identify niches within the greater socio-military historiography. *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada's Great War*, provides excellent resource material for this thesis. The most obvious connection between Rutherford’s work and this thesis is that he chose Lethbridge as one of his case study communities; however, the relevance of his work to this thesis extends to the use of noted scholars and theorists of nationalism. While this thesis utilises Benedict Anderson’s theories of ‘imagined community,’ to analyse the regional First World War experience, Rutherford uses Eric Hobsbawm’s work on imaginings in nationalism as a contrast to the purpose of his own work.²⁰

According to Rutherford, much of Lethbridge’s public response and attitudes towards the First World War appeared “not as actual history, but as imagined bonds.”²¹ This thesis will demonstrate that these ‘imagined bonds’ did not just occur spontaneously

¹⁹ Anderson, 7-10.

²⁰ Robert Rutherford, *Hometown Horizons: Local Responses to Canada's Great War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002), xi.

²¹ *Ibid*, 35.

at the outbreak of war. They were a result of a process that occurred in the community's formative years, during which time an official identity, predisposed to support of the Empire and by extension, the war, had been constructed, imposed, and reinforced. This thesis is not, however, merely a reworking of Rutherford's ideas by removing the comparative component of his work. It is a separate and distinct study of the impact of imagined community on the regional First World War experience. As Rutherford notes, he chose Lethbridge as a case study subject because of its small city status, geographic location, socio-economic status, and accessibility of primary sources. His study is primarily limited to the years 1914-1918, and unlike this thesis, he did not examine the Boer War and militia years, or the post-war legacies of the First World War experience.

Rutherford's work illuminates the diversity of the Canadian homefront experience, and is not concerned with official identity or community identities. He speaks to this effectively in the work, stating; "I would not say, however, that this book emphasizes local or even regional identities; only that these became part of a much more complex perceptual mix when it came to representing the war publicly and to fashioning the many boundaries that divided homefront populations."²² Nevertheless, this thesis is similar to Rutherford's work in that it will make use of demographic markers and traits to establish a sense of identity within the greater community.

This thesis includes an analysis of the Boer War and the pre-war militia, but fits best within the broader Canadian military historiography of the First World War. Writing this thesis would have been impossible without the vast and varied primary source accounts specifically relating to the Lethbridge First World War experience, much of it

²² Ibid, xvii.

originally compiled by Lord Beaverbrook and A.F. Duguid. These sources, including war diaries, nominal rolls, operational reports, personnel files, and correspondence are now housed in Library and Archives Canada. The local artillery battery regimental histories provided another valuable source of information. Veterans eager to tell their stories compiled many of these in the post-war years. Most were a collaboration between various members of regimental associations, rather than trained historians. According to Cook, some historians disagree about the value of regimental histories, however, Cook defends these histories: "Although the regimental histories were by no means the last word in exploring or explaining the experience of war, they filled an important historiographical gap..."²³ The regimental histories provided useful and interesting sources of information, filling the gap until the long overdue official history was completed in 1962.

Of the three regimental works relevant to Lethbridge, the 61st Battery, which does not have an identifiable author, was the only one written during the war. It is similar to a brigade-level war diary, but is more specific to the actions of the battery and includes operational details and anecdotal information, covering the period from 1916-1919. Just published in 2002, it includes an afterword of post-war information relating to some of the veterans of the battery.²⁴ *The Diary of the 20th Battery CFA* was written by J.C.K. MacKay and published in 1938. The author, a veteran of the battery, documents the experiences of the battery on the Western Front, not so much in terms of operations, but more on day-to-day life, battlefield experiences, and amusing occurrences, providing

²³ Ibid, 63.

²⁴ This version was published by Naval and Military Press as part of a series of similarly themed regimental histories and other specialist materials. Information regarding the original publication or the source of the afterword is not available.

excellent social context to the brigade-level war diary. A similar work, *The 39th*, written by battery veteran F.G. Holyoak and published in 1947, documents the experiences of the 39th Battery from 1915-1918. Like the regimental history of the 20th Battery, this work is important in understanding the local war experience and contains frank accounts of problems within the battery, including relationships between officers and enlisted men.

It should be noted that the 20th and 39th Battery histories were each written by a veteran of those respective units, who each relied heavily on their own memories or those of collaborators. Allowances must be made for this when considering each source, including inaccuracies of memory and the fact that they may never have had a complete understanding of the operational situation in the war. Although they are imperfect, as primary source accounts they certainly have an important place in Canada's First World War historiography, as well as in this thesis.

This thesis will also rely heavily on the primary source accounts from the local newspaper and from those who served, through their memoirs, letters, diaries, speeches, and autobiographies. In the style of Tim Cook, who made frequent use of similar primary sources, a large selection of this material has been compiled and consulted in the research and writing of this thesis. As Cook has argued:

Through their letters, diaries, and memoirs, the soldiers left us first-hand testimonials to the trials of the trenches. Many were compelled to write the war out of their system, reconstructing or regurgitating their experiences to avoid being consumed by them. These testimonials reach across the decades, and their words, whether passionate and detailed observations or quickly jotted notes, provide moving glimpses into the war experience that cannot be garnered solely from the official records.²⁵

²⁵ Tim Cook, *At The Sharp End: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1914-1916* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2007), 6.

To further examine the social aspects of this research, local newspaper accounts will be analysed to provide an understanding of cultural, religious, and social sensibilities of the community, as well as how the military was portrayed or accepted. This will include attitudes towards the war, service, recruitment, and fundraising. Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta has had from its very early days a wide range of newspapers that published not just the news, but accounts of daily life, both within the city limits and into the rural areas and neighbouring communities. A range of these newspapers have been consulted, but for the purposes of this work, the *Lethbridge News* and the *Lethbridge Daily Herald* will be closely examined in terms of the effect of print media on the development of imagined community and the furtherance of constructed myth and memory.

For more than a century, the imagined community of Lethbridge has evolved. Over the years, the city has distinguished itself in many ways, not the least of which is its reputation as an ‘artillery town.’ While the popularity of military service has waxed and waned over the years, Lethbridge has always maintained an active or reserve battery since 1908. This thesis will focus primarily upon the contrast of official identity and community identities as they were reflected and shaped directly by Lethbridge’s First World War experience, and will argue that the local artillery batteries were socially and culturally distinctive when compared to their infantry counterparts. The reasons for this lay not just within the contemporarily imposed official identity, but also within the diverse imaginings of those who served, their families, and their communities.

Chapter 1 – Boer War Imaginings

Section I – Populating the Prairie

Southwestern Alberta is the traditional land of the Blackfoot peoples.¹ During the years of the early fur trade, the region was known as Rupert's Land and was under the control of the Hudson's Bay Company, although the area accounted for very little of their fur enterprise. It was not until 1864 that the first sustained contact between the Blackfoot people and white settler-colonists occurred. George Houk, an American-born whiskey trader and trapper arrived in the area to do business with the Blackfoot and returned to Montana with news of rich coal deposits in the coulees along the Oldman River.² Houk's successful excursion into the region encouraged similar ventures by other American whiskey traders and by 1869, Alfred Hamilton and John Healy had established Fort Hamilton, a private trading post which became better known by its colloquial name of Fort Whoop Up.³ In 1870, Nicholas Sheran, an American mineral speculator arrived and began the first coal mining operation on the site now known as Lethbridge.⁴

The burgeoning whiskey trade brought violence to the area and had devastating health effects on the Blackfoot people. In response, the Canadian government sent the newly formed North West Mounted Police under the command of Colonel James Macleod to stop the whiskey trade and bring law and order to the Canadian west, which was then known as the North West Territories. They arrived at Fort Whoop Up in October 1874 to find the site practically abandoned and the whiskey trade was shut down

¹ The local Blackfoot populations are the *Kainai* (Blood) and *Piikuni* (Peigan). The *Kainai* reservation is located between the towns of Cardston and Fort Macleod, while the *Piikuni* reservation is just east of Pincher Creek.

² John D. Higinbotham, *When The West Was Young* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1933), 104.

³ Andy den Otter and Alex Johnston, *Lethbridge: A Centennial History* (Lethbridge: Lethbridge Historical Society, 1985), 27-33.

⁴ Higinbotham, 105-106.

with little fanfare.⁵ In 1877, Treaty 7 was signed with the Blackfoot Confederacy, which limited them to reserve lands and shortly thereafter, the first residential schools were founded.⁶ With peace and security established in the region by the North West Mounted Police and binding agreements with the Blackfoot in place, the seeds of capitalism, based upon coal and other land resources, were able to take root. As Benedict Anderson asserts, the development of capitalism is an important first step in the creation of imagined community.⁷

While the first entrepreneurs in the coal industry were American, the lucrative deposits soon caught the attention of wealthy British and Central Canadian investors, the most prominent of whom was Elliot T. Galt, who arrived in the area in 1881. He determined that the site was most suitable for long term mining and began the process of permanent settlement.⁸ At about the same time, vast tracks of land to the south and west of the Galt mine site, contemporarily known as Coalbanks, were parcelled out to ranching interests. According to Gordon E. Tolton, the distribution of ranchlands was indeed a politicised process:

The opening of the 1880s was truly a golden age in the blossoming Canadian ranching industry. In 1881, the Conservative government of Sir John A. Macdonald passed an order-in-council granting any individual or ranching company a grazing lease of up to 100,000 acres for the rate of one cent, per acre, per year. Thus, the impetus was set for large scale financiers and friends of the federal government to be granted leases. This was the era of the big open range ranches, and the new industry became dominated by corporate investment from eastern Canada and Great Britain.⁹

⁵ den Otter and Johnston, 32-33.

⁶ A total of five residential schools were established on the Blood and Peigan reservations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁷ Anderson, 37.

⁸ den Otter and Johnston, 46-47.

⁹ Gordon E. Tolton, *Rocky Mountain Rangers: Southern Alberta's Cowboy Cavalry in the North West Rebellion – 1885* (Lethbridge: Lethbridge Historical Society, 1994), 11.

While the open range ranches were primarily controlled by Central Canadian and British investors, they were worked in large part by American-born cowboys who were instrumental in the development of the Canadian western-frontier image. This image was prominent during the North West Rebellion of 1885, for example. At this time, there was a fear that other First Nations groups might side with Louis Riel and the Metis. Once assurances were received from the Blackfoot leadership that they would remain neutral, a large portion of the North West Mounted Police stationed in the region, were freed up to assist in the conflict.¹⁰

Also responding to assist in quashing the rebellion were 116 cowboys, ranchers, ex-policemen, trappers, and cattlemen from Southwestern Alberta who banded together to form a quasi-military group that they called the Rocky Mountain Rangers. They wanted to fight against Riel's forces, but were authorized only to provide security in various local communities.¹¹ It is likely that it was with the formation of the Rocky Mountain Rangers that the romantic notion of the rugged men of the west responding to a call of duty from their Queen and Empire may have originated. It was an image that would be incorporated in recruiting for the Boer War and First World War. The original deployment of the Rocky Mountain Rangers was described in an eastern publication as follows:

Headed by their youthful but intrepid commander, Capt. Stewart, the Rocky Mountain Rangers presented quite a formidable appearance as they left McLeod (sic), amid the loud huzzas of the garrison. Their tanned faces almost hidden beneath the brims of huge Spanish sombreros, strapped on for 'grim death.' Around many of their necks were silk handkerchiefs, which besides being an embellishment prevented the irritation by their coarse brown down or 'Montana' broadcloth coats. Over pants of the same material were drawn a pair of chaps. Cross belts pregnant with cartridges, a 'sixshooter,' sheath knife, a Winchester slung across the pommel of the saddle and a coiled lariat completed the belligerent outfit. Mounted on 'bronchoes' good for 60 to 100 miles a day, they soon disappeared in the distance, a loud clanking of bits and

¹⁰ Ibid, 24.

¹¹ Ibid, 53-54.

jingling of their huge Mexican spurs now gave place to the rattling of the transportation wagons.¹²

This grandiose description was written for Anglo-Canadian audiences, who had already adopted notions of the Canadian west that were much more in line with that of the American west than that of the decidedly British and highly romanticised image of the North West Mounted Police. The North West Mounted Police had been in the west for more than a decade and had already achieved a reputation of being handsome, red-coated paragons of law and order, cloaked in Victorian notions of manliness and virtue.¹³ The Rocky Mounted Rangers reflected a more rugged, frontier image but still adhered to many of the social constructs of manliness, duty, honour, and patriotism. The rugged wild west ‘citizen soldier’ fearlessly answering the call to arms was a constructed identity that would be applied to the volunteer servicemen of Southwestern Alberta through the South African War, the First World War, and beyond.

Meanwhile, the Galt influence continued with respect to the settlement of Coalbanks. In this regard, Elliot Galt was aided by other newly arrived citizens of prominence, including Charles A. Magrath, William Stafford, Dr. F.H. Mewburn, John D. Higinbotham, C.F.P. Conybeare, and Harry Bentley. These men, in effect, the Euro-Canadian founding fathers of the community, shared a similar background and vision for the future. Each was of British-descent, well-educated, affluent, and ready to capitalize on this new frontier community becoming an economic hub in the North West Territories (later Alberta). These men and their families set the tone for the greater official identity and burgeoning imagined community of Lethbridge as they established their own

¹² Ibid, 5.

¹³ Michael Dawson, *The Mountie: From Dime Novel to Disney* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1998), 6-7.

business interests and developed the community's infrastructure, including transportation and communication services, urban planning, churches, and schools.

In 1885, Ottawa granted a post office name change from Coalbanks to Lethbridge.¹⁴ The name was chosen in honour of William Lethbridge, a wealthy British investor in the company.¹⁵ Although the change may seem of little lasting consequence, it had a profound effect upon the evolution of imagined community and served as a cornerstone of the construction of official identity. Eliminating the original name, Coalbanks, which had its origins in the Blackfoot language and was a relic of the region's 'uncivilized past,' distinguished the town from the neighbouring communities of Coaldale and Coalhurst. Choosing the new name of Lethbridge, symbolized the priority of wealth, power, and social position embodied by its prominent British benefactor. The name Lethbridge also implied the vision of the town to grow beyond its single-resource origin.

While the early social, political, and economic elite were a relatively homogenous group, Lethbridge's diversity was growing steadily. In addition to the indigenous inhabitants of the area, other visible minorities, particularly those of African- and Chinese-descent were employed as labourers or in the service industry. To fill its employment needs, the Galts brought in large numbers of miners, most of whom were single young men of Eastern or Central European origin. As the population continued to expand and diversify, immigrants of non-conforming ethnic and racial backgrounds experienced a fate similar to the Blackfoot peoples, being segregated and marginalized because of social and political constructs rooted in Victorian notions of race and class. In addition to the social stratification that occurred at this time, the area became

¹⁴ den Otter and Johnston, 40.

¹⁵ Ibid, 37.

geographically divided, with large areas of the ‘North Side’ designated for use by the miners of various ethnicities, including those of British-descent, but of lesser economic means. This was an informal arrangement and was not likely imposed upon these communities by any specific influence.

The growing divide between conforming and non-conforming identities came to the forefront in 1891 when members of the community’s elite began to push for official incorporation as a town, in order to further the settlement process. According to historians Andy den Otter and Alex Johnston, “The indifference of labour contrasted sharply with the activity shown by the town’s middle-class and revealed the growing gap between these two groups. The aspirations of both segments of the community differed greatly as the workers did not share the merchant’s dream of major metropolitan status for the town.”¹⁶

As the social and economic constructs of the newly-minted town were forged, the majority of the population, including the large bachelor workforce, remained apart from the official discourse. For the mineworkers and railway labourers, life was lived from paycheque-to-paycheque. The work was often difficult, dangerous, and monotonous, and when payday came, labourers sought relaxation and entertainment. This often took the form of drinking, gambling, and visiting brothels.

In response to concerns about immorality, the community’s elite sought to bring ‘civilizing influences’ to Lethbridge, including women whose presence would tame the frontier town through marriage and the establishment of families. For men in a heteronormative society, it seemed that finding a spouse in the frontier was a practical

¹⁶ Ibid, 50.

matter and many unions were devoid, at least initially, of the romantic notions of marriage. Women became valued members of the greater community, with some being property owners and entrepreneurs, while others took on more 'traditional' roles, as homemakers, maids, teachers, and nurses. As with men, there was certainly no single women's experience.

With the influx of women and families, the next focus in the civilizing process was the development of an education system. The first school was a privately built, one-room public school house constructed in 1885, expanding to two rooms shortly thereafter and serving the educational needs of the children who lived south of the railway yard.¹⁷ The Catholic school, built by Father Leonard Van Tighem, was populated primarily by children of mineworkers who lived north of the railway yard.¹⁸ By 1891, the school board closed the original public school and opened Central School, a showpiece, two storey Gothic-style structure on a prominent 'South Side' location.¹⁹ Recognizing the educational needs of the non-Catholic children living north of the railway yard, the school board constructed what was described as a 'simple schoolhouse,' which they named North Ward School. The working-class children of miners who lived on the 'North Side' were encouraged to attend this school rather than crossing a busy railway yard."²⁰

In addition to the obvious disparity in the construction of the two schools, entrenched notions of social stratification contributed to this educational segregation. North Ward School had been constructed in direct competition with Van Tighem's Catholic school, which likely had much more to do with the development of official

¹⁷ Ibid, 43.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid, 57.

²⁰ Ibid, 58.

identity than concerns for the safety of working class children. den Otter and Johnston speak to the prevailing attitudes of the social elite, who controlled the public school board and the purse strings as follows:

Father Van Tighem's school was disliked by Lethbridge's non-Catholic majority. They believed that uniform public schools were the essential instruments in setting the basic moral and civic standards in the community. In other words, the future character of western Canada depended upon the children's education; and, in a society made up of a myriad of ethnic groups, a single school system was the best instrument to instill common values into the nation's youth. Van Tighem's school, by catering to the children of the Roman Catholic, Slavonic coal workers, would, they believed, retard the homogenization of Canada's population.²¹

Of all the elements identified by Anderson that help to formulate a cohesive sense of imagined community, education may have been the most important for the citizens of Lethbridge, particularly as they moved towards the beginning of the twentieth century. As the elite purveyors of official identity recognized public schools as an agent of homogeneity in an ethnically disparate society, the Canadian school system was undergoing a similar process. Lead by the Imperial Federation League, schools took a lead role in transforming the education system into a paragon of patriotism, based upon idealized British and Anglo-Canadian sentiments. In his book, *Painting The Map Red*, Carman Miller notes that "British ideals provided identity and significance to the disparate, fragile British North American community of the 1880s."²² He further asserts that "The patriotic education of the youth not only moulded tomorrow's citizens but spread patriotism into 'homes through the children.' As critics of 'selfish' individualism, imperialists preached collective values, discipline, and the subordination of self to the

²¹ Ibid, 72.

²² Carman Miller, *Painting The Map Red* (Canadian War Museum and McGill Queen's University Press: Montreal, 1993), 5.

common good. Their promotion of school, athletic, and military drill and uniforms endeavoured to inculcate a sense of community, and loyalty to ideals and institutions.”²³

In comparing the local perspective analysis of den Otter and Johnston to the national perspective analysis by Miller, local and national attitudes towards providing a nationalistic- and imperialistic-based education were in virtual lockstep. In terms of the moulding of young minds and hearts, the locally imposed official identity reflected the attitudes of the Imperial Federation League, who were prominent in the greater Anglo-Canadian official identity. All that was left was to find a means by which the local imagined community would evolve to adopt such imperialistic and nationalistic sentiments, yet complete conformity could not be achieved within the adult population. This goal would be more possible if one could influence the children. This became particularly relevant during the years of the First World War, as the children who were educated during this timeframe would be the men and women who would or would not support the war effort.

At the close of the nineteenth century, the imposed official identity of Lethbridge was well formed and certainly in line with nationalist and imperialist Anglo-Canadian ideals. This did not mean that all citizens of Lethbridge had willingly adopted the official identity, however, the myriad of community identities were often openly at odds with one another and the official imposed identity. As den Otter and Johnston explain, “Many Lethbridgians even blamed the town’s rowdiness on the immigrants, a belief based upon tales of disorderly weekend parties and noisy weddings, and an assumption made more believable because police and newspaper reports always singled out ethnic troublemakers.

²³ Ibid, 6.

They seldom labelled Anglo-Saxons who got into trouble or those who owned brothels and saloons.”²⁴ Lethbridge was lacking a cohesive sense of imagined community at the close of the nineteenth century. Among some segments of local society, the American influence was every bit as strong as their British and Anglo-Canadian counterpart. In physical appearance, Lethbridge resembled the idealized American west frontier town much more than it did similarly sized communities in Eastern and Central Canada.²⁵ It was the outbreak of the South African War in 1899 that tipped this balance in favour of an imagined community more in line with British and Anglo-Canadian values and away from that of the Americans. This is consistent with Anderson’s ideas of the development of imagined community, especially as it relates to what he describes as uniting the masses through the common experiences of war.²⁶

Section II – The Dress Rehearsal

On 11 October 1899, just weeks prior to the dawn of a new century, the South African War, also known as the Boer War, began. The thirty-two month conflict saw 7,368 Canadians serve alongside other Imperial and colonial forces.²⁷ This section will focus upon how certain aspects of the war shaped and reflected the official identity and evolving imagined community of Lethbridge and area. In an effort to analyse this impact, this thesis will borrow an idea from Carman Miller, which he used to analyse the French-English divide in Canada’s Boer War participation. Miller argued that the Boer War was a dress rehearsal for the divide that continued on a much larger scale during the First

²⁴ Ibid, 68-70.

²⁵ The frontier appearance of Lethbridge, with its saloons, brothels, gambling halls, and other similar establishments is described in great deal in Higinbotham’s *When The West Was Young*.

²⁶ Anderson, 80.

²⁷ Miller, 3.

World War.²⁸ This thesis will demonstrate that the term ‘dress rehearsal’ is an apt one for Lethbridge’s Boer War experience, which tipped the balance of perception of imagined community away from American influences and towards a more decidedly British orientation. This shift in the evolution of imagined community towards imperialistic ideals bolstered the efforts of the community’s social elite to promote a very British-centric official identity. This dress rehearsal prepared the local citizenry to accept their place as ‘good citizens of the Empire,’ both at home and on the battlefields of Europe during the First World War.

According to Anderson’s notion of war as a unifying force, individuals can identify with more than one community or possess multiple identities. Although there was a definite evolution in the regional sense of imagined community in Lethbridge, many people who lived in the area considered themselves active participants in the imagined communities of Anglo-Canada and of the even wider British Empire. It is likely that this was always the case, but it seems that participation in war brings a sense of unity and common purpose that compels many individuals towards the safety and security offered by a shared sense of the attitudes, beliefs, religious affiliation, and cultural ties found in one or more imagined communities.

Although the provinces and territories of Canada had been in confederation for several decades, Lethbridgian’s identification as citizens of the empire was firmly rooted in British colonialism. According to Denis Judd and Keith Surridge in, *The Boer War: A History*, social and economic historians disagree about the primary causes of the Boer War. Those with a social perspective believe that the conflict was rooted in differences in

²⁸ Carman Miller, “Framing Canada’s Great War: A Case for Including the Boer War,” *The Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 6, no. 1 (April 2008): 4-5.

law, language, and customs. Economic historians posit that the war was primarily a struggle between colonial powers over control of important port cities and lucrative diamond and gold deposits.²⁹ Although the war was justified to the Canadian public as an effort to protect the rights of Anglo settlers in South Africa, it is likely that these or other imperial economic concerns alone would not have motivated the citizens of Lethbridge to fully embrace the war. They may also have been influenced by the social arguments, particularly those relating to issues of racism and slavery.³⁰ According to Anderson:

Colonial racism was a major element in that conception of 'Empire' which attempted to weld dynastic legitimacy and national community. It did so by generalizing a principle of innate, inherited superiority on which its own domestic position was based to the vastness of the overseas possessions, covertly conveying the idea that if say, English lords were naturally superior to other Englishmen, no matter: these other Englishmen were no less superior to the subjected natives. Indeed one is tempted to argue that the existence of late colonial empires even served to shore up domestic aristocratic bastions, since they appeared to confirm on a global, modern stage antique conceptions of power and privilege.³¹

As noted in Section I of this chapter, colonial racism or ethnocentrism was alive and well in Lethbridge and area at this time. Although the established Euro-Canadian community of Lethbridge was less than fifty years old, an already entrenched system of social stratification existed and was demonstrated through the exclusion of First Nations people and other citizens of colour. For the elite who were imposing the white-male dominated, British-centric official identity, colonial attitudes towards race paralleled their own beliefs. They were drawn to the opportunity to support a war effort based on the

²⁹ Denis Judd and Keith Surridge, *The Boer War: A History* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2013), 221-25.

³⁰ In terms of racial issues, it should be noted that the Boers had much in common with Canadian settlers, particularly in the west. In addition to their experience as 'pioneers,' the Boers were of European-descent and practiced Christianity, as were the majority of those living in the North West. As a result, the 'race argument' for the war required the Canadian public to overcome the natural instinct to identify by skin colour and religion alone in order to imagine the Boers as an 'inferior enemy.' The Boer practice of enslavement of African peoples did help to further this view.

³¹ Anderson, 150.

Victorian notions of manliness, honour, and duty as exemplified through the white, Christian, Anglophone men of privileged social and economic standing. After all, it was the ‘white man’s burden’ that those of a certain privilege and pedigree should care for the needs of those of lesser means, particularly those of a different racial background.

Colonial racism as applied by the British Empire, was a good and noble thing; however, the colonial racism as applied by the Afrikaners (Boers), who had been enslaving the Bantu and other African peoples, was brutal and uncivilised. These attitudes can be applied to the shift of imagined community away from American influence towards that of the British in Lethbridge and area. In the minds of the elite, the British colonial racism was only meant to ‘help’ the less fortunate, whereas the American brand of racism had led to the enslavement of millions of similar African peoples that the Boers were now exploiting. While the United States had ended the practice of slavery by this time, the memory of this abhorrent period of recent history was still ingrained amongst the African-American expatriate community of Western Canada, many of whom had been born into slavery in the American south. In identifying with the imagined community of the British Empire, particularly as it related to the Boer War, one did not have to choose between ‘right versus might,’ as this imagined community saw itself as possessing elements of both.

A second imagined community with whom the citizens of Lethbridge may have identified during the Boer War was the greater Dominion of Canada, particularly that of Anglo-Canada. Although most of Lethbridge’s social elite had strong ties to the east, many others including some of those of British descent cared little of what happened outside of the North-West Territories. In support of the British war effort, Canada was asked to raise two full contingents in addition to the recruitment of Canadians into British

units, the most prominent being Lord Strathcona's Horse.³² The French-English divide, in Miller's words, was not an issue in this region and the idea of Canadian contingents having the opportunity to distinguish themselves among the soldiers of the Empire was appealing to those in the community who embraced the imposed official identity and became a part of the evolving imagined community as well. According to Miller, patriotism was just one of many reasons that Canadians enlisted for service in South Africa, but it was not necessarily more important than other motivators such as employment opportunities or a desire for adventure and travel.³³ Perhaps the greatest contribution of the Boer War to the national imagined community lay more in the competition it fostered between Canada and other dominions and colonies of the Empire.

This competition was recorded in newspapers throughout the country. For example, on 9 November 1899, the Lethbridge *News* reprinted an article that had originally appeared in the *Victoria Colonist*, that stated in part: "A country declaring war against Great Britain must expect to fight several nations, for Canada, Australia and other colonies are practically nations...I knew Canada would do her share...but I hardly expected to see her outdo the Australian colonies. In Australia and New Zealand the greatest enthusiasm prevailed and like in Canada, there are thousands of capable fighting men willing and anxious to go to the front." The article, titled "Canada is Loyal," inculcates the reader with the patriotic rhetoric that later became so familiar during the First World War. It describes the Canadian response as follows:

Everywhere it is gratifying to note the loyalty and sympathy of the sturdy Canuck for Her Majesty in the present crisis. Each item of news from the seat of war is scanned with the keen interest and deep anxiety that ever tends to kindle anew that burning desire in the breast of the Canadian to go to the assistance of those already sacrificing

³² Carman Miller, *Canada's Little War* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd., 2003), 54.

³³ Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 58.

all that is dear and sacred to them in their desire to aid the empire. If the support of the Canadians can save it the British flag will never be sullied with the blot of defeat.³⁴

It is little wonder that young men with a taste for travel and adventure would be seduced by this aspect of national imagined community as they could identify with the image of a 'sturdy Canuck' rendering assistance to those who have already 'sacrificed so much.' As will be discussed later, the 'sturdy Canuck' image was one that many of the young Southern Alberta men, who had perhaps admired the regional response to the North West Rebellion and having received a thoroughly patriotic, British-centric education, could have easily embraced.

Having considered the influence of the two broader imagined communities on their regional counterpart in Lethbridge, it becomes evident that the Boer War very likely moved the hearts and minds of many citizens away from American influence and directly to that of the British. Ottawa and London had noticed American influence on the North West, which was one of the reasons that Canada was asked to form its own contingents for service in South Africa. Imperial authorities believed the support of Canadians, both at home and on the battlefield, would be more forthcoming if they could feel a sense of recognition of their place and destiny as a dominion of the greater Empire. Canadian authorities had their own expectations from Britain also and their concerns could be directly related to the citizens of Lethbridge and area.

According to Miller, Canadian authorities believed that enthusiastic support of Britain in the Boer War would ensure that the British would support Ottawa in the event of American aggression in the North West.³⁵ The North-West Territories were still

³⁴ "Canada is Loyal," *Lethbridge News*, November 9, 1899.

³⁵ Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 5.

primarily a vast hinterland and though the railway had traversed Canada, much of this region was still isolated, with little sense of affection or loyalty to their Eastern and Central Canadian counterparts. Consequently, powerbrokers in Ottawa feared the United States' annexation of the North-West Territories and that the citizens there might even be willing to let that happen. Miller further illustrates this direction of thought by pointing to a *Montreal Star* article that reads as follows: "If England's power were shattered, Canada might...become an easy prey to one of the great powers that would quickly reach out its grasp...millions should not weigh for one second in the balance, for if England is crushed, Canada is lost."³⁶ Not only did the Boer War experience greatly influence our evolving national and regional imagined communities, but it may have, at least in the mind of the Canadian authorities, preserved the integrity of the dominion geographically, economically, culturally, and socially.³⁷ For the citizens of Lethbridge, this was one more nudge away from the influence of the Americans and towards that of the British.

The impact of the Boer War experience on the imagined community of Lethbridge and area has received very little attention from either scholarly or amateur historians. Neither den Otter nor Rutherford examined the Boer War in any great depth in any of their writings. Major Christopher Kilford, the former commanding officer of the 18th Air Defence Regiment in Lethbridge, who authored a narrative-based account of local military history entitled *Lethbridge at War: The Military History of Lethbridge From*

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ The idea that Britain would side with Canada in the event of American aggression was more complicated than Canadian authorities and the media would admit. In reality, this period of time saw very warm relations between the United Kingdom and the United States, as they perceived themselves as having much in common in terms of 'Anglo-Saxon superiority' and in sharing the 'White Man's Burden.' The Alaskan Boundary Debate, which had begun in 1867, reinforced the notion that British support was not guaranteed. Confirmation of this would be forthcoming in 1903 when during the arbitration process, the British representative ruled in favour of the United States and against Canadian interests, proving that participation in the Boer War did not guarantee British protection.

1900 to 1996, only included a brief account of the region's participation in the Boer War, primarily from a more homefront perspective with very little analysis.

With scant discourse, this thesis must rely on primary source material in an effort to piece together as much information as possible. The primary source material is found in two sources. The National Archives in Ottawa holds in its collection the muster rolls, personnel files, and other official Boer War documents which provide a basis of useful demographic information for those who served in the Canadian contingent. In terms of community response, the primary information source is the archives of the now defunct *Lethbridge News*. The *News* archives were examined for evidence of recurring themes specific to the area's Boer War experience such as overall presentation of the war to the readership, recruiting, and community attitudes and response. The community attitudes and response can be further sub-categorised into send off and homecoming, fundraising, patriotic rallies, and the creation of local myths and legends.

At the turn of the twentieth century, newspapers were the primary source of formal information for much of the Canadian public. Print media was more influential than ever before, because society in general was becoming increasingly educated and literate.³⁸ This was accomplished through a new program of state-sponsored compulsory education.³⁹ According to Anderson, "print knowledge lived by reproducibility and dissemination."⁴⁰ He further suggested that the languages of print "unified fields of exchange and communication," promoted a common print vernacular, and in doing so, "formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally

³⁸ Paul Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 8.

³⁹ Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 3.

⁴⁰ Anderson, 37.

imagined community.”⁴¹ Anderson further addresses the influence of print media on a regional or local level. While he uses the example of colonial Spanish America, noting that a Madrid newspaper might be interesting, but not important to an individual living in a Spanish colony,⁴² the same concept can be applied to the citizens of Lethbridge and area. British and even Eastern and Central Canadian newspapers might have been interesting in some fashion, but most would find information within local publications more relevant to their lives.

For the citizens of Lethbridge, the main source of such information was the Lethbridge *News*, a weekly publication that featured a primarily local perspective, with national and international elements included. The first issue of the *News* was published on 27 November 1885. In the years that followed, it provided information regarding the important news stories of the day via the use of telegraphic news service and reprints from other papers. International news at that time was restricted and spasmodic and also very cost prohibitive. As a result, the printer was very selective as to which international or national news items would warrant the cost of reprinting in the paper.⁴³ Much of the newspaper’s content included advertising, articles, editorials, and letters of local interest, often promoting an aspect of the community such as coalmining or agriculture, or speaking to a concern of the day, including the need for irrigation or morality issues. As such, the Lethbridge *News* became a valuable instrument for imposing official identity, but also greatly influenced and reflected the evolving community identity.

⁴¹ Ibid, 44.

⁴² Ibid, 62-63.

⁴³ Georgia Green Fooks, “A History of the Lethbridge Herald, 1905-1975” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1975), 37-38.

During the years of the Boer War, the Lethbridge *News* provided the citizens of Lethbridge with much of the information that formed their understanding of the imperial and national doctrine and policy relating to the conflict. Each weekly issue of the *News* was about eight pages in length and included several press service articles and clippings from other newspapers. The local perspective was represented through articles relating to recruiting, fundraising, and patriotic events in support of the general war effort. War news pertaining directly to local servicemen and campaign specifics were not plentiful, but did appear from time to time, usually in the form of a letter from the front, sent to a friend or family member and subsequently, shared with the community through the newspaper. Miller notes that such letters were common in local newspapers across Canada and often, the experiences that they were sharing did not send the most positive or patriotic message. According to Miller, the Canadian contingent was “A highly literate body of men, including some inveterate letter writers, (who) poured out their woes to sympathetic and well-connected friends and relations back home.”⁴⁴ Similar letters that appeared in the Lethbridge *News*, suggest that while some of the information that was provided could be perceived as a criticism of the war itself or the prosecution of the war effort, much more was of a narrative that reinforced imagined bonds, by providing first-person perspectives, bits of news, and interesting anecdotes.

Local articles, advertisements, and editorials in the *News*, were generally supportive of the overall war effort; however, for individuals, this medium could be used to build up their personal reputation or tear it down, depending upon their place within the greater imagined wartime community. The creation of myths and legends during times of

⁴⁴ Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 78.

war has always been important to the forging of imagined bonds. Closer reading of the Lethbridge *News* during the war, shows local examples of the glorification and vilification of citizens, based solely on their perceived patriotism and place within both the official identity and imagined community. To illustrate this, this thesis will examine the situation surrounding two individuals with local connections – Major Charles Ross, who served with Robert’s Light Horse and Sergeant Frederick Charles Klopp of K Division - North West Mounted Police. While neither man was from Lethbridge, strictly speaking, they figured more prominently in the accounts of the day than any of the nearly twenty men from the community who served in the Canadian contingent. Perhaps this is because public interest was less about residency in the strictest sense than it was about the glorification of that which fit within the imagined bonds.

During the course of the war, about twenty personal letters were printed within the pages of the Lethbridge *News*. Of these, nearly half were written by or about Major Charles (Charlie) Ross. Very little can be ascertained as to Ross’ pre-war life. However, it is likely that he lived or conducted business within the immediate area at some point prior to the war, judging from the matter in which his first letter is introduced: “We are indebted to Mr. W. Laurie for his kindness in permitting us to use the following interesting letter received by him this week from Mr. Charles Ross, who is well known to the majority of our readers.”⁴⁵ A total of seven letters written by Ross, along with a short story about him were printed in the *News*. These letters must be viewed with the same skepticism reserved for other primary source accounts. However, the veracity of each and every detail is not as important as the tone and nature of the writing. It may be

⁴⁵ "Charlie Ross," *Lethbridge News*, March 15, 1900.

tempting to disregard Ross' ego-driven letters as being quixotic, however, the author of the published short story, William Griesbach, does to some degree corroborate Ross' high opinion of himself and together, the writings provide a story to which the readership of the *News* and supporters of the war could feel personally connected.

Ross' first letter, dated 15 March 1900, states that he has been residing in Boston, Massachusetts for some time, and that it was from there that he sailed to South Africa. Upon his arrival there, he learned that he would not be able to join the Canadian contingent. He maintained that he personally met with Lord Kitchener, who bestowed upon him a commission with Robert's Light Horse, where he promptly began recruiting Western Canadians and Americans who had served in Cuba.⁴⁶ These Americans were likely former members of Roosevelt's Rough Riders or other similar units. This connection with men of the North-West and the Rough Riders will appear again later in the analysis of the recruiting that occurred in the region during the Boer War. Ross reinforced his personal connections to Lethbridge and area commenting that "We will show them what stuff the Western men are made of."⁴⁷ In his second letter written to his wife, dated 9 August 1900, Ross listed his personal achievements, noting that: "I captured the town of Fredifort with 50 Boer prisoners, 90 rifles and 10,000 ammunition. I have been mentioned twice in despatches to Lord Roberts."⁴⁸

By January 1901, Ross reported that he rented a farm and was making huge profits growing tomatoes and corn and had also amassed a large amount of livestock and supplies. He noted that he has been offered a captaincy more than once and that if the

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "News from South Africa," *Lethbridge News*, August 9, 1900.

war lasted much longer he might be forced to take it. As to his ever increasing military prowess, Ross writes: “The Boers have offered a £200 reward for me and a free pass in and out of the Boer lines to anyone that will bring me to them, but they will not catch me if I know it. One hundred and eighty of them had me surrounded last week, and I was all alone, but I succeeded in getting away from them. I am roving around among them all the time watching their movements.”⁴⁹ In subsequent letters, Ross speaks eloquently to the sights and sounds of the countryside and the more difficult aspects of the war. He is particularly descriptive in his account of the ‘scorched earth’ policy used to remove Boers from certain areas⁵⁰ “We are taking all the Boer women and children that we can find wagons to haul them in, and taking all the cattle, horses, sheep and goats that we find on our route. We get so many sheep that we have to kill hundreds every day, and burn every wagon, buggy, saddle etc., we don’t require for our own use. We are leaving an awful train of smoke and ruin wherever we go, but still the Boers will not give in.”⁵¹ The content of the letters always seems to return back to Ross’ personal accomplishments, documenting his rise from lieutenant to captain to major, his earning of the Distinguished Service Order and his attempts for a Victoria Cross.⁵²

It might be tempting to disregard the ‘myth’ of Charlie Ross. However, the account attributed to William Griesbach, a respected Canadian veteran of three conflicts seems to support at least some of Ross’ claims. Published in the *News* on 7 March 1901 under the heading “Some Experiences of the War,” it describes Ross as “one of the

⁴⁹ "Charlie Ross," *Lethbridge News*, January 24, 1901.

⁵⁰ Imperial forces were at a disadvantage when the fighting the Boers on their own soil. The Boers were far better adapted to the rough terrain and trying climate. For the British, it was more expedient to drive away the Boers and then destroy their infrastructure. In addition to the practicality of the ‘scorched earth’ policy, it also served to break the morale of the Boers and their supporters.

⁵¹ "Letter from Captain C. Ross," *Lethbridge News*, April 25, 1901.

⁵² "Major C. Ross Arrested," *Lethbridge News*, June 20, 1901.

greatest characters in Africa, he is a typical western man and he conducted himself out there with an abandon worthy of the west.” The story goes on to document a misunderstanding involving some horses and Ross’ alleged threat to horsewhip a British general. Not satisfied with the outcome of the dispute, Ross’ foray into South African agriculture is described as follows:

He astounded all of us by commandeering a Boer farm near Pretoria all the wagons and stock thereupon and setting up as a farmer. He dug up all the vegetables on the place and taking them to Pretoria sold them at war prices to the inhabitants. Then he got together a band of horses and turned them out on his ranch. He fortified the place and removed all obstacles so that he should not be taken by surprise in the evening. There he lives alone except for his Kaffir servants. He always goes about armed with two Mauser revolvers and his Mauser rifle is always handy and is loaded with ammunition to meet emergencies.⁵³

It is indeed curious that the most celebrated individual in the pages of the *Lethbridge News* was clearly living in the United States at time of enlistment, and was likely a legend of his own making. Yet, he epitomized the idealized notions of the independent minded frontier citizen soldier from the Canadian North West. The glorification of such individuals continued into the years of the First World War and certainly reinforced the idea that at least in wartime, the bonds of imagined community were elastic, in that circumstances could be stretched or moulded to fit an accepted or preferred narrative.

While Major Charles Ross exemplified the independent, rugged spirit of the idealized North West fighting man, another notorious man, Sergeant Frederick Charles Klopp showcased the darker side of the community’s imagined wartime bonds. Just as ‘heroes’ serve a unifying purpose, so do ‘villains.’ The Klopp situation that played out on the pages of the *Lethbridge News* demonstrated how fear mongering and rumour

⁵³ "Some Experiences of the War," *Lethbridge News*, March 7, 1901.

spreading in the name of patriotism can destroy a reputation. The attention given by the newspaper would also potentially serve warning to those who were members of community identities that do not conform to official identity and imagined community had best keep a low profile.

According to official records, Frederick Klopp was born in Ontario in 1866 to German immigrant parents. In 1888, he joined the North West Mounted Police. His personnel records indicate that at time of engagement, he changed the spelling of his name from Klopp to Clopp, possibly in an effort to make it appear British. As the North West Mounted Police were represented as idealised paragons of British Victorian manliness, Clopp may have felt that this change would be beneficial in terms of being accepted into the organisation and then for subsequent promotion.

By the summer of 1892, Clopp had been promoted to corporal and placed in charge of the St. Mary's outpost near Lethbridge. In 1900, the now Sergeant Clopp was relocated to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. His former commander, R. Burton Deane, remained in the Lethbridge area and was a prominent member of the community. It is interesting to note that when questions as to Clopp's patriotism arose in 1900, Deane, who knew him well and could have spoken for or against his character, made no comment.

By 1900, Lethbridge had grown sufficiently to hire a town inspector to enforce bylaws and attend to other local regulatory business. According to an article in the *Lethbridge News* on 8 February 1900, Mayor F.H. Mewburn had taken it upon himself to offer the position to Sergeant Clopp and Clopp had accepted, all of which had taken place without posting the position or informing other members of town council. The article indicated that there was not much of a reaction among those present, other than some

acknowledgement that Clopp would be fine for the job, but when the *News* reporter asked to see the mayor's job offer and Clopp's response, he was refused and the indignant reporter then began to ask more serious questions.⁵⁴ One week later, the *News* reported that the town council had made a blunder and was now being censured by an angry public, who were critical of the secrecy surrounding Clopp's appointment and the exclusion of local men from the application process. The *News* represented local attitudes towards the appointment as follows:

The citizens base their objections on the ground of the unpatriotic stand taken by him and his openly exalting over the British reverses, while at the same time serving as a British officer and wearing Her Majesty's uniform, as well as him being an outsider. It is this last reason and the manner in which the appointment originated that we take exception to, although we must say that a man who so far forgets himself as to trample on the flag he pretends to serve, while he applauds the enemy's (Boers) victories and the reverses of Her Majesty's troops, of which he is supposed to be a loyal supporter, would not make a very desirable officer for the town of Lethbridge. Our people are loyal to the Queen whom we honour and love, and would not tolerate for an instant the stand Mr. Clopp is reported to have taken.⁵⁵

Upon closer reading of the above excerpt taken from the *Lethbridge News*, the reporter appears to vacillate between two separate arguments: the first being that Clopp is an outsider and the second that he is a disloyal citizen and therefore unfit to represent Lethbridge. Although the criticism is that Clopp is an outsider and that the position was not advertised, the article is self-serving in that it shifts to unsubstantiated rhetoric in lieu of accurate details.

The next issue of the *News* reported Sergeant Clopp's, acceptance of the position and comments on the charges against him: "He stated that he could honestly say that he had never made any such statements, and that the writer was an infamous liar, as there

⁵⁴ "The Council," *Lethbridge News*, February 8, 1900.

⁵⁵ "An Unpopular Appointment," *Lethbridge News*, February 15, 1900.

was not a word of truth in the whole article. He had not thought that there was a citizen in Lethbridge who would lower himself so low as to try to blast his character when there was no foundation. He would make it very warm for the parties before he was through with it.” In the week since the original allegations had been levelled against Clopp, members of the town council sought the source of the allegations, but not one person would publically claim to have any knowledge as to Clopp’s supposed anti-British feelings, despite the rumours remaining in force.⁵⁶

One month later, it was announced that Clopp’s appointment had been cancelled and that a posting for the position would be forthcoming. Mayor Mewburn, who had remained silent during the controversy spoke at the council meeting on 22 March 1900. The *Lethbridge News* reported that “Mayor Mewburn then made a few remarks...saying that he was chiefly responsible for the appointment extended to Mr. Clopp. He did not think it necessary to apologize. He had since heard Clopp was a Boer sympathizer, but had not found anyone who would come out straight and say that they heard him make these remarks.”⁵⁷ The council went on to appoint a new inspector and no further mention of Sergeant Clopp was made.

The situation surrounding the Clopp appointment played out in just a few months, with the public fray seeming to extinguish as quickly as it erupted. Looking back on the incident within the context of official identity and evolving imagined community, some conclusions can be drawn as to the motivations of those involved. Perhaps the situation began with a mayor, who had always been a part of the community’s social elite and felt that he could fill positions through appointment at his own discretion. This was not

⁵⁶ "F.C. Clopp," *Lethbridge News*, February 22, 1900.

⁵⁷ "Town Council," *Lethbridge News*, March 22, 1900.

initially challenged by other members of the town's council and may not have been an issue until the reporter from the *Lethbridge News* was denied access to information and the right to publish supporting documents. The public outcry was quite possibly fueled by the initial report in the *Lethbridge News*, which cast the mayor and council in an unfavourable light. As there was no supporting evidence that Clopp ever espoused pro-Boer or anti-British sentiments, coupled with the fact that he publically denied it, it appears that he was likely a scapegoat. Considering that both the public and members of the local government wanted to brand him as a foreigner or outsider to the community, which clearly was not the case, it is likely that his ethnicity may have had something to do with his name being conflated with Boer sympathies. Lethbridge was a very young community of immigrants and Clopp had likely spent as much time in community as the citizens who were condemning him.

The controversy surrounding Sergeant Clopp's appointment can be compared to other Canadian communities, including Charles W. Humphries' example of a prominent Victoria citizen, who unlike Clopp, was considered to be "as good a Britisher as could be found in Canada."⁵⁸ While Clopp vehemently denied that he ever expressed pro-Boer sentiments, William Marchant, a federal customs collector, elected member of the Victoria Public School Board, and noted pacifist, was very open in the expression of his anti-war sentiments. In a letter written to the *Victoria Times*, Marchant analysed the Boer and British positions and concluded that the war would be unjust and "most diabolical," as the Boers were "a peaceful, liberty loving, and inoffensive people."⁵⁹ As with the Clopp situation, a vocal public response ensued, much of which questioned Marchant's

⁵⁸ Charles W. Humphries, "Two B.C. Pacifists and the Boer War," *BC Studies*, no. 45 (Spring 1980): 118.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 117.

patriotism and his ability to serve in his elected position on the school board. Humphries notes that there was an immediate call for his resignation, as in his position, Marchant could not be trusted with the hearts and minds of Victoria's children and the once respected citizen was branded a "disloyal menace."⁶⁰ His reputation duly damaged, Marchant served out the remainder of his term as school trustee, but never again held public office.⁶¹

As Anderson theorizes, war is the ultimate unifying factor, but people do not always unify around the positive; the bonds of negative feelings can be every bit as strong. It is as easy to feel superior by vilifying an individual as it is to feel connected when glorifying one. While the Marchant situation demonstrated that anyone who voiced anti-war or pro-Boer sentiments could suffer consequences regardless of their ethnicity and status in society, those who belonged to community identities outside of the Anglo-Canadian majority were at higher risk. For members of certain community identities that may not have had much in common with the official identity, there was a not so subtle message – the appearance of being an outsider or culturally different could lead to being branded anti-British, which in a dominion at war, was a dangerous thing. These groups had one of two choices in the matter – they could publically embrace the wartime imagined community or keep a low profile.

In addition to extensive space allotted to the stories of Ross and Clopp, the paper was dominated by articles reprinted from other newspapers, which followed the progress of the war and later included casualty listings and other stories of interest. The first war news with a local flavour spoke to the recruiting efforts in the North-West Territories.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 118.

⁶¹ Ibid, 119.

According to Miller, the first contingent, comprised mainly of the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles, did not include many North West recruits, with the Western Canadian centre based in Vancouver and Winnipeg.⁶² The 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles was a different matter. Although this unit would again be based in Winnipeg, there would be sections of men from communities throughout the North-West Territories, including a section from Fort Macleod, Pincher Creek, and Lethbridge. In November 1899, Captain Williams, a recruiting officer from Winnipeg, held public forums in all three towns to ascertain the level of interest of each. According to the *Lethbridge News*, “his meetings were well attended and the young men viewed the organization with an enthusiasm that left no doubt in the captain’s mind as to the probability of being able to carry out the proposed plans.” The article goes on to caution the potential recruits against enlisting for fun or adventure, noting that “experienced men could not think of advising men to enlist for the fun there is in it. The supreme object of every young man should be to take advantage of this opportunity to get a thorough military training, so that should occasion ever demand it, he will be prepared to take up arms in defence of his country in a manner that may win for him credit and renown.”⁶³ It is interesting to note the author’s attitude chastising the young men for seeking fun and adventure, but encouraging them to seek personal glory.

A total of twenty recruits from Lethbridge were selected for the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles and they joined thirty men from Fort Macleod and thirty-three from Pincher Creek.⁶⁴ Members of this group were mostly taken from the ranks of the North

⁶² Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 56-58.

⁶³ "Mounted Rifles," *Lethbridge News*, November 30, 1899.

⁶⁴ These statistics are taken from recruiting information as reported by the *Lethbridge News* and are approximate, as the list was revised several times prior to leaving for Eastern Canada.

West Mounted Police and supplemented with local cattlemen and ranchers.⁶⁵ In terms of imagined community, the image of these men, like that of the Rocky Mountain Rangers before them, was carefully crafted to make the most of their rugged ‘man of the west’ appeal. This image blended the most venerated portions of the idealised British soldier with that of the North West Mounted Police and the popular American icon Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders.⁶⁶ Miller describes the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles: “Clad in their riding trousers, cowboy hats, and spurs, with their guns slung over their backs, the Second Contingent’s mounted riflemen created an indelible popular image of this force as being composed of quintessential western Canadian frontiersmen, fearless, versatile rough riders from the plains...”⁶⁷

In addition to idealised imagery, recruiting efforts in Lethbridge were also a matter of community pride and competition with other communities. In an article extolling the virtues of the Lethbridge men, who had been called to do their part in the “struggle for justice and liberty,” the *Lethbridge News* spoke directly to the communities that have gone before them: “While other towns were boasting of the patriotism of their citizens and the heroisms of their young men in the present crisis now pending between Great Britain and the Boers in South Africa, Lethbridge has been quietly awaiting her turn to speak and now that the time has come she can proudly take her place with the most prominent towns in the West.”⁶⁸ In reality, local participation in the war was quite

⁶⁵ "For the Transvaal," *Lethbridge News*, January 11, 1900.

⁶⁶ Michael Dawson, “‘That Nice Red Coat Goes to my Head like Champagne’: Gender, Antimodernism, and the Mountie Image, 1880-1960” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 32, no. 3 1997; Bonnie Reilly Schmidt, “Contesting a Canadian Icon” Female Police Bodies and the Challenge to the Masculine Foundations of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in the 1970s” in Gentile and Nicholas eds *Contesting Bodies and Nation*.

⁶⁷ Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 159.

⁶⁸ "For the Transvaal," *Lethbridge News*, January 11, 1900.

small, not because of a lack of interest, but simply because the numbers needed did not warrant much further recruiting.

A second recruiting drive swept through the area in February 1900 when the renowned Sam Steele arrived, looking for 400-500 experienced ‘roughriders’ who were good shots and at home in the saddle. Most of the area recruits for this unit, Lord Strathcona’s Horse, were taken from the Pincher Creek and Fort Macleod areas, and these were supplemented with a handful from Lethbridge. Although Steele was pleased with the quality of the men, many of the best horse and riflemen had already been recruited by the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles.⁶⁹ According to Miller, the image of Strathcona’s Horse was even more idealised than that of the Mounted Rifles. He describes the unit as follows:

In the public mind Strathcona’s horsemen were not just stereotypical rough-riders of the plains – sturdy, self-reliant, western frontiersmen who could ‘tell the time by a glance at the sun, to whom the trees and grasses were true compasses and who regarded the rifle as their constant and most trusted companion.’ They were seen as a corps d’elite, as befitted a unit raised by a wealthy, titled gentleman. The public enjoyed enumerating the many well-bred men in this regiment...⁷⁰

Among Lord Strathcona’s Horse Western recruits was John Smith Stewart, a young trooper from Edmonton. The connections he formed during the war would later play a large role in bringing a militia unit to Lethbridge. Stewart would go on to become a brigadier-general during the First World War, having played a part in nearly every aspect of the Southwestern Alberta First World War experience.

Perhaps one of the most significant means by which a community can express its imagined wartime bonds is through the ceremonial act of sending men off to war. During

⁶⁹ Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 296.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

the Boer War and later in the First World War, the send off usually occurred at the local train station. The *Lethbridge News* reported the send off of the local section of the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles as follows: "It was an ideal moonlit night, and as the hour was just after the different church services were dismissed, nearly everybody in town seemed to have gone to the depot. The special (train) arrived at 9:20. As it pulled into the depot cheer after cheer filled the air, hats were waved, and reports from exploding bombs were heard on every hand." The report went on to detail a ten minute ceremony in which Mayor Mewburn gave a short speech and each Lethbridge man was presented with a sum of \$18.00 from the community. The closing of this ceremony is described as follows:

But all too soon the train began to slowly move out, there was a rush for the car, and from all sides there were cries of 'Good bye,' 'Good luck to you,' etc. Then as the train began to leave the crowd behind, some gave vent to the patriotic feeling reigning within their breast, by cheering; others, apparently too deep in the thought of what the parting would mean, waved their hats and handkerchiefs; while at intervals between the cheers, the sweet melodious notes of a cornet sounded faintly above the noise of the gathering, as a Salvationist feelingly played verses of 'God Be With You Till We Meet Again.' Thus the citizens of Lethbridge bid adieu to our boys.⁷¹

The citizens of Lethbridge only had the one opportunity to host a send off during the years of the Boer War. Like the recruiting numbers, the send off was small and yet, filled with symbolism, patriotism, and emotion. The mayor's speech and the newspaper's account were not very different from that of communities across the nation. This is significant, not in its rhetorical and formulaic content, but more so in the fact that very disparate Canadian communities adopted the same or similar imagery as part of their imagined wartime community.

When considering the term 'imagined community,' the implication is that the evolution and development of such a community is primarily a psychological exercise.

⁷¹ "Lethbridge Contingent," *Lethbridge News*, January 18, 1900.

While it is certainly true that ‘imagined’ components such as the presentation of war news, creation of myths and legends, and the patriotic rhetoric used in recruiting and ceremonial send offs forged the imagined bonds of war, there is a certain participatory element that is also necessary. Featured prominently amongst the community’s wartime endeavours was the participation of women and children. Throughout history, war has been seen as primarily a masculine activity, however, in terms of the evolution of imagined community, there is a role to be played by women and children as well.

The local newspaper’s reporting on homefront activities gives a further understanding of the roles of women and children or at least how their participation was portrayed from the point of view of those writing the narrative. For example, in an article which described the ceremonial send off dated 11 January 1900, both women and children were singled out for special mention. It was noted that “at the depot a very large crowd of friends and well-wishers, including many ladies, were in waiting to bid them farewell and give a parting word of good cheer and encouragement.” The participation of children was especially highlighted in the initial fundraising effort, where a subscription had raised a total of \$330.85 from the community, including \$15.88 from the public school district staff and pupils.⁷² The theme of school children supporting the war effort in general and especially the local men who marched away, recurred throughout the local coverage for the duration of the war. A 26 April 1900 Lethbridge *News* article, entitled “Gratifying to Lethbridge,” demonstrates the emphasis that was placed upon the participation of children in war-related homefront activities:

We congratulate the young people of Lethbridge on the magnificent results of the patriotic concert held last week...The consensus of opinion seems to be that it was the best concert ever given by local talent in Lethbridge, and, when we consider that fully

⁷² "For the Transvaal," *Lethbridge News*, January 11, 1900.

two-thirds of the performance was executed by young girls and boys it is all the more laudable....Another thing very noticeable and particularly commendable, was the apparent unity of heart and mind throughout it all. Although two young people's societies may have been instrumental in getting up the concert, members of every denomination were represented on the program. Religious and sectarian beliefs were cast aside and all united in perfect harmony in an undertaking that may eventually be the means of bringing a small ray of sunshine into some heart beclouded with sorrow and pain caused by the present war.⁷³

Taken in its entirety, this article appears to be wholly in line with the imposed British-centric official identity, yet many aspects of imagined community are also reinforced. First, it can be noted that the role of children is described as that of patriotic citizens and future leaders. Boys and girls were acknowledged as working together for a common higher purpose. By mentioning that two separate organizations have combined their efforts and by noting that "religious and sectarian beliefs were cast aside," existing divides are portrayed as erased by a 'coming together' led by young people in the name of a higher, more noble purpose. This purpose is identified as support of the queen and the Empire. Further, both young and old are united in patriotism, duty, and honour. Certainly the claims in the article cannot be taken as perfectly accurate, however, in terms of the forging of imagined bonds, details are less important than perceptions.

While boys participated in various war-related homefront activities, they were encouraged to feel connected to the men who marched away by participating in such quasi-military activities as cadets and preparatory drill.⁷⁴ In assessing the influence of these activities on the national level, Miller notes that; "promotion of school, athletic, and military drill and uniforms endeavored to inculcate a sense of community, and loyalty to

⁷³ "Gratifying to Lethbridge," *Lethbridge News*, April 26, 1900.

⁷⁴ Desmond Morton, "The Cadet Movement in the Moment of Canadian Militarism," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 13 (Summer 1978): 56-58; Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2001); Jeffrey Keshen and Anne Millar, "Rallying Young Canadians to the Cause: Anglophone Schoolchildren in Montreal and Toronto during the Two World Wars," *History of Intellectual Culture* 9, no. 1 (2010-2011): 1-16.

ideals and institutions.”⁷⁵ The boys of Lethbridge and area were encouraged to join a quasi-military drill group lead by a local veteran of the North West Rebellion, Major Burnett. On the same day that the article which praised the young people for their fundraising concert appeared, a second article was printed announcing that a Boys’ Brigade would meet every Friday evening and that “all boys desirous of joining and who are willing to obey orders may report to his [Major Burnett’s] house.” The article encouraged parents that “They (the boys) could not be put into better hands and each can expect to receive a very valuable training. The citizens have good reason to be deeply indebted to Major Burnett for his kindness in offering to devote so much time and thought purely in the interests of our small boys.”⁷⁶ Within a few years, Major Burnett’s group had been succeeded by a more formal cadet presence, which preceded the official militia presence in the community. Many of these young boys were among the early recruits to serve in the First World War.

Women’s contributions to the Boer War were almost always reported in a gender normative manner. They were showcased as the organizers of concerts, the suppliers of refreshments, and a ‘genteel’ presence at the send off and homecoming celebrations. Several initiatives were led by Mrs. R. Burton Deane, wife of the superintendent of the Lethbridge detachment of the North West Mounted Police. As the majority of the enlistees from Lethbridge were former policemen, Mrs. Deane became the motherly figure who presented the ‘boys in khaki’ with the community’s token of appreciation at the formal welcome home celebration.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 6.

⁷⁶ "Boys’ Brigade," *Lethbridge News*, April 26, 1900.

⁷⁷ "Honour the Brave," *Lethbridge News*, May 30, 1901.

This is not to say that women did not participate in more meaningful ways, it is just that it was never documented in the pages of the *Lethbridge News*. There is only the vaguest mention of more direct participation of a ‘local’ woman in the war effort; a single article, “Who Killed Oom Paul?,” features the lyrics to a patriotic song, apparently authored by a “North West lady who is a nurse at the war in South Africa.”⁷⁸ The nurse is not identified, nor is it indicated exactly where in the North-West Territories she is from, and none of her service-related experiences are included. The reader is left with a vague notion that perhaps ‘local’ women did contribute in more direct capacities, but the idea remains on the fringe of the discourse that created the local imagined wartime community.

While the Boer War surely reinforced the imposed official identity and influenced the development of imagined community, there is a conspicuous absence of material relating to individuals who were part of the myriad of other community identities present in Lethbridge at the time. Every one of the twenty recruits for the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles identified was of British-descent.⁷⁹ Most, if not all of the patriotic activities that occurred within the community adopted a decidedly pro-British theme. No mention, aside from the Clopp situation, was ever made as to members of the community not sharing the same enthusiasm for the war. While it can be speculated that there was likely a diversity of opinion, it does not appear to have been publically expressed, nor has

⁷⁸ "Who Killed Oom Paul?," *Lethbridge News*, January 17, 1901.

⁷⁹ In comparing the demographic information available for the Lethbridge contingent of the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles to that of J.L. Granatstein’s analysis of both contingents of the Canadian forces that fought in South Africa, it is evident that Lethbridge was not exemplary in the fact that all of the recruits were of British descent. Granatstein’s work indicates that while the Canadian contingents on the whole were more diverse than the Lethbridge contingent, there was still a heavy British-born majority. Further information relating to Canadian contingent demographics in the Boer War can be found in Granatstein’s *Canada’s Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace*.

record of any dissent surfaced. There is an indication within the public subscription lists, however, that members of various community identity groups did support the greater fundraising efforts. On 25 January 1900, the *News* reported a list of names of members of the community who had donated to the Contingent Fund. On the list appears the names of the social elite of the community like Elliott Galt, F.H. Mewburn, C.F.P. Conybeare, and J.D. Higinbotham, and among these more ethnically diverse names like Steve Doesak, Mike Grisak, and Paul Royko.⁸⁰ A search of census records indicates that the latter names were of Austrian, Hungarian, and Slovakian origins respectively. The motivations of these contributors in supporting this fund cannot be determined, however, it is important to acknowledge that members from non-British community identities did participate.

In February 1901, many of the original twenty local recruits returned to Lethbridge. It appears that the community was uncertain and unprepared, for how best to welcome them home. Unlike the First and Second World Wars, those who enlisted in the Boer War did so for a contracted period and so the homecoming did not correspond with the end of the war or victory celebrations. On 21 February 1901, the *News* reported that a small gathering at the McKenzie House Hotel was held to welcome the 2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles veterans home. It was duly noted that the community was ill prepared to give them the celebration they deserved. The article stated that “Lethbridge was the slowest town in Canada. Every small town or village which had the honour to be represented in the contingents, had welcomed back their boys with enthusiasm and rejoicing, while Lethbridge appeared to be totally indifferent to their return.”⁸¹ This

⁸⁰ "Contingent Fund," *Lethbridge News*, January 25, 1900.

⁸¹ "South Africa News," *Lethbridge News*, February 21, 1901.

sentiment was reinforced by an editorial which appeared in the paper on 4 April 1901 and read in part:

When the boys left our town to help fight the battles of the empire, of which we proudly claim we form a part, there was no lack of enthusiasm on the part of our citizens, who with hurrahs and waving of hats and so forth wished them God speed and safe return. Of those who left this district, some will never return – they spent their blood for their country's sake and are now lying under the South African sod – others have returned maimed and ill, while the majority have returned hale and hearty. Tributes to their valour and other manly qualities have been showered upon them in no stinted manner, both in Africa and the Motherland, and an expression of welcome has been given the returned men by nearly every town and village, which sent its quota to the front. But what about Lethbridge?⁸²

Once again, the imagined bonds of wartime community tightened around Lethbridge; the citizens, duly chastised for their indecisiveness if not their lack of patriotism, organized a homecoming fitting for their local 'heroes.' The 24 May 1901 affair was described in the *News* in great detail and the citizens who had been chided for their lack of response were now highly praised for their efforts. The report read in part as follows: "The event of last Friday evening was entirely in harmony with the sentiments connected with the day on which it occurred – Victoria Day – and will long be remembered as a very pleasant event in the history of our town and a memory mark in an epoch of the Empire." It went on to praise the program and the presentations made to the veterans, with the new mayor, Frank Oliver, quoted as saying that "he was proud to see so many good citizens of our beloved country present to welcome the men who had been fighting for the Empire in South Africa. He was proud to say that these men had made history for the British Empire; had made history for the world."⁸³ Now that the matter of providing an appropriate homecoming was taken care of, it was implied that the citizens

⁸² "Lethbridge Patriotism," *Lethbridge News*, March 28, 1901.

⁸³ "Honour the Brave," *Lethbridge News*, May 30, 1901.

of Lethbridge had once again proved themselves ‘good citizens of the Empire,’ and in terms of patriotism, and in their mind, had proven that they were equal to or better than any other community in the dominion. For the remainder of the war, the coverage was maintained, but included very little local flavour and even the eventual British victory was not covered in any great depth.

In terms of issues relating to memory and commemoration, the impact in the city was rather minimal. Fort Macleod and Pincher Creek had lost a few of their men, but the men of Lethbridge had gotten through the war with only one casualty. The death of Leonard Evans, a local barkeeper who had served with the Canadian Scouts, was reported to the Lethbridge *News* through a letter from Major Charlie Ross on 6 March 1902 as follows: “I had 7 men shot in the last two days, two of whom are dead. One of them was poor Leonard Evans of Lethbridge. He and I were riding along together, when he was shot right through the heart, and of course died instantly. I felt so sorry about it I almost felt like going home at once.”⁸⁴ Evans’ death occurred almost a year after the official homecoming for the majority of the Lethbridge men and no evidence can be found to suggest that his loss was officially commemorated by the community, nor does he appear on any local memorials, including the cenotaph. It is likely that Evans’ death occurred too late in the war to be useful in encouraging or affirming nationalism, official identity, or imagined community.

In considering the Lethbridge and area Boer War experience, the direct participation by those who went to war and the members of the community who supported the war effort bolstered the imposed British-centric official identity and

⁸⁴ "Charlie Ross, D.S.O.," *Lethbridge News*, March 6, 1902.

influenced the evolving imagined community. By the war's end, the town had moved away from the American-style frontier town image and began to emulate other small towns in Canada. The rugged frontiersmen image was still celebrated, but it was conflated with the idealised British soldier of the Empire.

Many aspects of the community's wartime experience, including the influence of print media, education, participation of women and children, as well as the ceremonial send offs and homecomings combined to create attitudes favourable to the greater imagined communities of Anglo-Canada and Imperial Britain. The Boer War, although much smaller in scale, was indeed a dress rehearsal for the community's participation in the First World War. Examining the evolving imagined community through the interwar years, shows how elements of Anderson's theories of imagined community, particularly those related to capitalism, will become very important to the ever evolving local imagined community.

Chapter 2 – Militia Imaginings

Section I – Boom and Bust

During the early years of the twentieth century, Lethbridge and area experienced a great deal of change. The city expanded from a single-resource company town to the third largest city in the newly-formed province of Alberta. Perhaps the largest shift in the region occurred during the expansion of the agricultural sector, which not only affected the landscape and economy, but also further diversified an already eclectic population. Authorities in Ottawa saw the potential for agricultural development and this influenced their western immigration policies. Locally, the founding core of the socially elite ‘community builders’ still maintained great influence.

It was Charles A. Magrath, working in the capacity of commissioner of the North West Coal and Navigation Company, who was credited with spurring much of the agricultural development of Southwestern Alberta. This was accomplished through relationships formed with Charles Ora Card, who brought Mormon settlers to the region, developing the irrigated lands to the south and west of Lethbridge.¹ As the Mormon population expanded, several new communities sprang up, affecting the religious, cultural, and social composition of the region.² On the surface, the Mormons appeared to be ideal for the Anglo-Canadian and Imperial British imagined communities, as many were either of British birth or American-born of British descent, however, their distinct religious beliefs, especially relating to the practice of plural marriage (polygamy), placed

¹ Charles Ora Card, *The Diaries of Charles Ora Card: The Canadian Years 1886-1903*, ed. Brigham Y. Card and Donald G. Godfrey (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1993), xxxiii.

² Included among these distinctly Mormon towns are Cardston, Magrath, Raymond, Stirling, and Taber. The experiences of some of these rural communities in militia service with the 23rd Alberta Rangers will be briefly contrasted alongside that of Lethbridge’s 25th Battery.

them at odds with those in power. Mormon settlement in Southwestern Alberta was a cause for alarm across the nation, with articles appearing in central Canadian newspapers referring to the immigration of this group as an ‘invasion.’³

Japanese immigrants comprised a second group that settled primarily in the region south of Lethbridge, most of them young men from farming backgrounds, who came to work in service industries, build infrastructure, or farm. While most Japanese immigrants at this time preferred to settle in the coastal regions of British Columbia, one group of early settlers made their home near the town of Raymond. They formed the nucleus for the largest population of Japanese immigrants east of British Columbia at the time.⁴ Like the Mormons, the Japanese faced discrimination and racism and each group would have distinctive experiences during the First World War.⁵

Around the turn of the century, the federal government encouraged immigration by offering land grants to new homesteaders. Premium grants were offered to veterans of the Boer War and many of the local men who had served took advantage of this opportunity. In addition to this, European immigrants of various ethnicities were enticed to settle in the region, often gathering together to form enclaves. Most of these lands were not yet irrigable. According to Robert Rutherford, “the development of Marquis wheat and further experimentation in dryland farming techniques contributed to frequent land-buying frenzies, a rapid granting of homestead concessions, and population in-

³ Fooks, 66.

⁴ den Otter and Johnston, 146-48.

⁵ Although the Mormons and Japanese each faced discrimination from other segments of society, it manifested itself differently. The Japanese were a visible minority, whereas the majority of Mormons appeared to be physically similar to the majority of the settler-colonists already established in Southwestern Alberta. It was the religious practices and beliefs of the Mormons that was the root cause of the discrimination.

migration.”⁶ The large and diverse influx of these immigrants, combined with those who had already settled prior to the Boer War, made Southwestern Alberta an ethnically-diverse and culturally-unique population. With such an eclectic mix, it was difficult to organically develop a cohesive sense of imagined community.

Lethbridge, like the rural areas, was also experiencing rapid growth and change, including its incorporation as a city in 1906.⁷ The rush for farmland from 1907-1912 was met by a corresponding demand for urban land, which Andy den Otter and Alex Johnston described as follows:

Real estate fever gripped the city [Lethbridge] from 1907 to 1913. Prices soared and city lots were traded on markets as far away as Europe...One realtor bought 40 acres near Queen Victoria Park for \$40,000, subdivided the estate and sold portions of it in Lethbridge, Calgary, Toronto and Detroit. The licensing and registration of real estate agents in 1907 deterred the most dishonest of the speculators but the wheeling and dealing continued unabated until the bubble burst in 1913.⁸

While the rural and urban land rushes may have reinforced the frontier image of the community, federal and provincial officials were making plans to move the city away from its hinterland beginnings and American influence through the development of targeted infrastructure. Evidence of these plans lies in the landmark structures and institutions that were built around this time. In 1906, the federal government established the Lethbridge Research Station just east of the city.⁹ In 1909, the Lethbridge Viaduct, better known as the High Level Bridge, was completed. Owned and operated by Canadian Pacific Railway, the bridge spanned the coulees near the original Galt mine site

⁶ Rutherford, 27.

⁷ den Otter and Johnston, 79.

⁸ Ibid, 82.

⁹ “Lethbridge Research and Development Centre,” *Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada*, last modified February 18, 2016, <http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/science-and-innovation/research-centres/alberta/lethbridge-research-and-development-centre/?id=1180547946064>.

and remains the longest and tallest structure of its kind today.¹⁰ In 1910, the provincial government began construction of the first provincial jail.¹¹ The most prominent government building was the downtown post office, an imposing limestone structure complete with a domed clock tower. Opening in 1913, the post office, combined with the High Level Bridge, the Research Station, and the jail, gave a sense of permanence to the community.¹² These federal, provincial, and industrial structures signalled that Lethbridge and by extension, Southwest Alberta, was a valuable part of the province and the nation, simultaneously diminishing American influence on the local community and entrenching official identity.¹³

As the city grew, its infrastructure, service sectors, and labour force did as well. Large numbers of immigrants streamed in and, by 1911, the population had increased by 150% to 8,050.¹⁴ Men outnumbered women by a ratio of 24:1 and the population was far from homogenous.¹⁵ Rutherford stresses that Lethbridge was a “city transplanted, not transformed.”¹⁶ In analysing the diversity of the population during the early years of the twentieth century, Rutherford concludes that Lethbridge was “a polyglot conglomerate of communities that often remained separated by differences of language and religion. Local politics and business, however, remained under the control of an Anglo-Protestant

¹⁰ den Otter and Johnston, 82.

¹¹ Lynnece Kerner, “Lethbridge Correctional Centre: A History,” *Alberta Solicitor General*, last modified July 14, 2011, https://www.solgps.alberta.ca/programs_and_services/correctional_services/adult_centre_operations/correctional_and_remand_centres/Documents/LCC_History.pdf.

¹² “Federal Building Lethbridge,” *Canada’s Historic Places*, last modified June 16, 2005, <http://historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=3092>.

¹³ At this point in Lethbridge’s history, the official identity advocated for by the socially elite community founders was very much in line with the provincial and national agenda in terms of the province’s place within Canada, as well as Canada’s place within the greater Empire. Anglo-Canadian and British ideals were the central components of these official identities.

¹⁴ Rutherford, 24.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 28.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 24.

majority, conforming to the broad pattern of Anglo conformity and nativism in Alberta at this time.”¹⁷

While Rutherford is not speaking directly to the evolution of imagined community in his analysis of the lack of homogeneity among the citizenry of Lethbridge, his observations on diversity of language, ethnicity, and religion can be applied to this concept. A large part of the population, especially those who conformed to the official identity, were Anglophones. This group could be categorised as what Benedict Anderson describes as ‘Creole Pioneers.’ Anderson posits that for these ‘Creole Pioneers,’ “language was not an element that differentiated them from their respective imperial metropolises... creole states (were) formed and lead by people who shared a common language and common descent...”¹⁸ Putting aside the French-English divide in much of Canada, which did not really impact official identity or imagined community in Southwestern Alberta, it can be argued that the common vernacular language of English was a unifier for much of the populace, regardless of whether they had British or American leanings. It was the group that Rutherford identified as the ‘polyglot conglomerate’ that was segregated either by choice or circumstance. As these groups did not share the vernacular of the political and social elite, it was very difficult for them to participate in or embrace the evolving imagined community.¹⁹

Rutherford is correct in his assertion that the various community identities within the city tended towards a form of ‘self-segregation,’ in that they maintained the earlier

¹⁷ Ibid, 30.

¹⁸ Anderson, 47.

¹⁹ Another barrier faced by groups not sharing the common vernacular was limited access to print media. Print media was identified by Anderson as perhaps the most important tool in the evolution of imagined community. Lack of access to print media would have further marginalised the non-Anglophone citizenry.

practice of residing in informal ethnic groupings. However, this was not necessarily by choice. Those who maintained political and economic authority were known to impose segregation on individuals who belonged to community identity groups that they deemed undesirable or non-conforming to the imposed official identity.²⁰ The most powerful tool utilised by the elite was print media, which in Lethbridge, like many other communities, was often in line with the official identity.

Of all the growth and change that occurred in Lethbridge and area during the first decade of the twentieth century, the most influential in terms of the evolution of imagined community and most, if not all aspects of local life, was the establishment of the Lethbridge *Herald* in 1905. As Anderson suggests, print-capitalism provided a means by which time, power, and fraternity could be linked. In essence, print-capitalism “made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways.”²¹ Although not the paper’s founder, it was William Ashbury Buchanan who invested in the *Herald* and became sole owner in 1906, who exerted the most influence in terms of print-capitalism in Southwestern Alberta during the early twentieth century. Under his leadership, the *Herald*, which had started off as a weekly paper in competition with the *News*, had grown to daily status by 1907. As was the case with most newspapers in Canada at this time, ownership and by extension the newspapers themselves, were affiliated with political parties. The *News* and

²⁰ There are two obvious examples of imposed segregation in Lethbridge at this time. In 1907, city council consolidated and segregated local brothels or other houses of disrepute. This was accomplished under the auspices of health and sanitary concerns. More information on this is available in Belinda Crowson’s *We Don’t Talk About Those Women*. A second forced segregation occurred in 1910, when most of the Chinese residents of Lethbridge were forcibly relocated under the authority of a new city bylaw. This bylaw pertained directly to laundry businesses; however, by extension, it effectively moved almost the entire Chinese population into a designated area.

²¹ Anderson, 36.

its successor, the *Telegram*, although not overtly political, were considered Conservative publications, while Buchanan's *Herald* had Liberal leanings.²²

Prior to Buchanan's arrival, Charles A. Magrath had served as the unofficial leader of the social elite and later as the official representative of Lethbridge on the national stage, being elected as the district's Conservative Member of Parliament in 1908. In 1911, Buchanan, a Liberal candidate, defeated Magrath, having secured the support of the area's rural communities, with Magrath taking the urban vote. Both men maintained a professional and cordial relationship, as they worked to promote the area utilizing various schemes including the 25,000 Club.²³ 'Boosters' like Buchanan and Magrath, who supported the 25,000 Club, joined with the Board of Trade, hoping to grow the population of Lethbridge to 25,000 by 1912. The aggressive tone of this program was obvious in the letterhead of the Board of Trade, which read as follows:

Most up-to-date water system, finest climate
Mildest winter, most productive soil
Purest water, most progressive city
Most trees, most sunshine
Cheapest fuel, widest sidewalks
Best electric power, best schools, prize wheat
Of any place in Western Canada.²⁴

Buchanan's *Herald* both reinforced official identity and promoted the growth of imagined community, but did little to reflect the diversity of the various community identities in the city. In terms of tone and content, Buchanan maintained the editorial practices upon which the paper had been founded. According to local historian Georgia Fooks, F.E. Simpson (original editor of the paper), "had a racy style, particularly in his

²² Fooks, 68.

²³ den Otter and Johnston, 82.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

editorials which were fresh, vigorous and bright. He believed in calling a spade a spade, but on the other hand he was always building Lethbridge up. ‘Watch Lethbridge Grow,’ which was the slogan he adopted, permeated the paper, not only the editorial page but the other columns as well. If the editorials were sometimes overly optimistic, it was because of too much confidence and not a deliberate attempt to fool people.”²⁵ Fooks seems naive in her assessment that the controlling interests of the newspaper were just optimistic and not trying to deliberately mislead. Using print media to promote an agenda or encourage readership to consider issues in a certain way is a common practice. In his book, *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late Nineteenth Century Canada*, Paul Rutherford notes that “the daily press was the prime mythmaker,” where editorials in particular were used to promote specific agendas, often relating to progress, nationality, and morality issues.²⁶ The editorials that appeared in the *Herald* at this time were in line with the national trends.

For example, Buchanan’s 17 March 1908 editorial described his vision of the future as follows: “Lethbridge is going to be the centre of one of the best populated districts in Western Canada... We ought to keep that in mind when we are figuring about the future of this city... Lethbridge is going to be a great deal larger city than the most sanguine every imagined.”²⁷ Despite the best efforts of boosters like Buchanan, the pace of growth could not be sustained and by 1913, Lethbridge, like other Canadian communities, suffered an economic recession. It was the outbreak of war in 1914 that proved to be the antidote for this sick economy.

²⁵ Fooks, 27.

²⁶ Rutherford, 156-57.

²⁷ Fooks, 76.

During the summer of 1914, as the world moved closer to war, the tone of the *Herald*, especially the front page and the editorials, became more serious. From the summer of 1914, through to the war's end in 1918, the Lethbridge *Herald* became the primary source of information for Lethbridgians on every aspect of the war effort. As influential as Buchanan and his newspaper were to the public perception of the war, another newcomer to Lethbridge, John Smith Stewart was similarly influential in terms of the local participation in the war itself. It was Stewart who successfully lobbied for a permanent military presence in the community in the form of a militia artillery battery.

Section II – The Militia Moves West

On 7 November 1907, the Lethbridge *Herald* announced the imminent formation of the 25th Independent Field Battery.²⁸ For those who had advocated for a permanent militia presence, this was welcome news. For the purveyors of official identity, authorisation for the unit provided another useful avenue by which to showcase and reinforce an imagined community, of which the 'good citizens of the Empire' model would be essential. While the North West Mounted Police had been a consistent presence in Southwestern Alberta for more than three decades, not since the North West Rebellion in 1885 had the citizens of Lethbridge volunteered for a militia force. Only a few members of the former Rocky Mountain Rangers still resided in the area. However, the Boer War was still well remembered and many of the veterans of that campaign were prominent members of the community.

Whereas Eastern and Central Canada had a long tradition of both permanent and militia force presence, the Boer War had brought about awareness, self-confidence, and

²⁸ "A Battery of Field Artillery," *Lethbridge Herald*, November 7, 1907.

renewed interest in communities across the nation.²⁹ In the years immediately preceding the Boer War, there was debate as to the vision for the militia moving forward, particularly as to a home defence versus imperial support orientation. James Wood, who has written what is considered to be the definitive work regarding the Canadian militia during this time, explores some of the central questions that were discussed and the eventual resolution in the form of the 1904 *Militia Act*. Most germane to this thesis are the issues surrounding the 1907/1908 expansion of the militia, particularly questions relating to the establishment, recruitment, and function of newly formed units.

According to Wood, central to the ‘militia myth’ is the popular perception at the time that the ‘citizen soldier’ was superior to the professional, because he had more at stake in terms of defending family, friends, and home.³⁰ At face value, this idea is both simplistic and idealistic. However, in the minds of many Canadians at the time, it made perfect sense. In Western Canada, very few people would have had any experience at all with professional armies and had learned in the past that self-reliance and banding together with one’s neighbours was the best form of protection.

Lethbridge had grown to look more like similar-sized communities in the east. There was, however, still a pride in the community’s frontier beginnings and the romance of the west was still integral to the imagined community. This is not to say that the imperialist movement, which had been evident during the Boer War years, was any less influential. Wood argues that throughout Canada there were anti-imperialist movements that could be associated with “colonialism, continentalism, isolationism, parochialism, or

²⁹ James Wood, *Militia Myths: Ideas of the Canadian Citizen Soldier 1896-1921* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 102.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 5.

nationalism...,” yet, “the Canadian imperial movement was never far removed from the local influences on its character.”³¹ This was the case in Southwestern Alberta, where the official identity remained deeply rooted in imperialistic values.

As Canada moved towards more independence in terms of militia and defence policies, they encountered few objections from Britain. Wood notes that attitudes in Britain towards the dominions had increasingly favoured self-sufficiency, as they had become financially burdensome. As a result, Britain encouraged Canada to adopt a defence policy which would result in them defending themselves and supporting the Empire when called upon.³² By 1908-09, orientation of the Canadian permanent and militia forces had moved from home defence to the consideration of an imperial defence context.³³ According to Wood, any question that allowing Canadians more control would lessen their ties to Britain were allayed by the feeling that the dominions could still be controlled by a “strong hand and flattery.”³⁴ The flattery aspect may have backfired, however, as more independence encouraged the development of ‘colonial conceit,’ wherein Canadians began to question the value of adopting British military traditions and organisation.³⁵

The most obvious manifestation of ‘colonial conceit,’ in terms of Canadian attitudes, related to the question of military dress. It had long been understood in Britain that the pageantry of uniforms could be used as a means to bolster recruiting and this tradition had also taken hold in Canada. As reforms were considered for the Canadian

³¹ Ibid, 55.

³² Ibid, 75.

³³ Ibid, 117-18.

³⁴ Ibid, 75.

³⁵ Ibid, 99.

militia, it was argued that British uniforms and pageantry were garish and not in line with the simple and practical ideals of the average Canadian. Wood argues that “they (militia reformers) portrayed pomp and ceremony as outdated relics...They did so knowing full well that the ‘fuss and feathers’ had previously been a necessary aid to recruitment.”³⁶ While Wood is correct in his assertion that the Canadian militia may have wanted to distinguish itself from the image of the red-coated professional soldier, he did not consider the differences in regional attitudes. Central and Eastern Canada had a much greater depth of experience with both professional and militia forces, whereas it was a novelty in the west. In Southwestern Alberta, where two new militia units were being formed, the uniform and all the ties of Empire that it carried with it were still important for recruiting efforts and forming the identity of the respective units.

Another aspect of the post-1904 Canadian militia that became integral to the formation of and recruitment for new Western units was the perceived social value of membership. The pay for militia service was relatively low and aside from the lure of the uniform, compensation for service might take the form of increased social status or sense of belonging. Officers for the new units were generally drawn from the socially elite of the community and so for the average volunteer, recruitment provided mobility to a level of society otherwise unattainable.³⁷ By closer examination of the events surrounding the formation of the 25th Independent Field Battery in Lethbridge and to a lesser degree, the 23rd Alberta Rangers, which had squadrons from Claresholm, Cardston, Pincher Creek, and Fort Macleod, it becomes evident that the Southwestern Alberta experience did not always coincide with Wood’s broader national analysis. This can be partly explained by

³⁶ Ibid, 102.

³⁷ Ibid, 143.

the novelty of having a militia presence in this region, but also by the area's unique frontier beginnings, which influenced its evolving imagined community.

Of the two militia units raised in Southwestern Alberta in 1908, it was the 23rd Alberta Rangers that most obviously maintained the frontier image, both in function and appearance. Many of those who joined the four Rangers squadrons in the area came from a farming or ranching background. They were ideal recruits as the Rangers were a mounted unit, which showcased their horse and marksmanship abilities. In terms of uniform, a compromise between the British and Canadian styles was adopted, in that the regular khaki attire was worn for all practical purposes, while the officers wore the more traditional red coat for ceremonial dress. A 13 June 1910 Lethbridge *Herald* article noted that although the Rangers were initially issued regular style caps, they were allowed to make the change to Stetson cowboy hats.³⁸ For the Rangers, this better reflected their frontier roots and commonalities with the 1885 Rocky Mountain Rangers. While Wood contends that the “aping” of the British regular was out of fashion in Eastern and Central Canada, he does not acknowledge that the west still heavily associated soldiering with the traditions and organisation of the British Army.³⁹ The result was a continuation of the blending of western practicality with British tradition and frontier imagery. Recruiting for these squadrons was never an issue and each maintained their allotted force of approximately sixty to eighty men during the years leading up to the First World War.

Contemporaneous to the formation of the Alberta Rangers was the establishment of the 25th Independent Field Battery in February 1908. While the Rangers were a distinctly rural-based unit, the 25th Battery was more urban in character. It was, however,

³⁸ “Cardston’s Farewell to the Red Coats,” *Lethbridge Herald*, June 13, 1910.

³⁹ Wood, 22.

founded upon a uniquely western ideal as evidenced from its inception when it was identified as the westernmost artillery battery in the British Empire. The distinction is made with the acknowledgement that British Columbia did have garrison artillery batteries, whereas the Lethbridge unit was a field battery.⁴⁰ It was only through the parsing of words that the distinction could be claimed and yet it appears many times across the decades in local newspaper and historical accounts. Like other elements of imagined community, perceptions can be more valuable than reality.

This is just one example of the myths or misconceptions associated with the battery, its commander, and the image it portrayed in the pre-war years. By closely examining these myths, as compared to what is verifiable in the historical record, and placing their experiences within the national context, it becomes evident that the 25th Battery was a fledgling unit that had difficulty in meeting recruiting goals and maintaining a respectable standard of performance. It is because of the battery's status as supplying the original contingent of local men to the First World War that their history and that of their commanding officer has become romanticised, idealised, and adopted as the centrepiece of imagined wartime community.

In identifying and understanding these myths and misconceptions, a close examination of the existing historiography of the battery is essential. The discourse on the Canadian militia in general during this period is relatively small, but well researched. However, the same cannot be said as to works relating to the specific militia units formed after the revised *Militia Act*. The only history of the 25th Battery consists of short segments authored by a former commander of 18th Air Defence Regiment in Lethbridge

⁴⁰ Major Christopher Kilford, *Lethbridge at War: The Military History of Lethbridge From 1900 to 1996* (Lethbridge: Battery Books and Publishing, 1996), 20-21.

as part of greater works on the military history of the city. *Lethbridge at War* and a near identical work entitled *On the Way!* by Major Chris Kilford are well researched and carefully cited. Kilford's account is based in large part on a speech written and delivered by Lieutenant Colonel F.H.H. Mewburn, an original member of the 25th Battery, for a 1938 artillery mess dinner in Edmonton. This is problematic for several reasons. Firsthand accounts, especially those written in retrospect, must be regarded with skepticism; particularly when written by an insider and delivered to an audience of his peers as part of a celebratory event. The only other known firsthand account produced by a member of the battery is *Memoirs of a Soldier*, a collection of the diary entries, letters, and memoir style writings of Brigadier General John Smith Stewart. Much of the material included centres on Stewart's early life and Boer and First World War service, while the militia period of 1908-1914 is only mentioned briefly.

In an effort to corroborate Mewburn's account, existing official documents and newspaper accounts must be considered. The battery's official documents are held at the National Archives and contain a small collection of correspondence, pay records, and equipment lists. The archives of the Lethbridge *Herald* do provide a little more useful information. In comparing the events as reported in the *Herald* with Mewburn's account, it becomes evident that while much of his basic information is accurate, there is a gap in the recording of the challenges and problems faced by battery in its early years. The omission of this information has encouraged myths and misconceptions of the 25th Battery. This thesis deconstructs these myths and misconceptions, while making use of the limited primary source material available, in an effort to determine the impact of the formation of the battery and the persons who served in it on the evolution of imagined community and attitudes towards and participation in the First World War.

The first misconception is the idea that Lethbridge received the artillery battery as the result of the special bond between John Smith Stewart and Sir Sam Steele, who at the time was officer commanding of Military District #13, headquartered in Calgary. Local lore has portrayed the relationship between Steele and Stewart as being a close one and further that this bond was forged when both served in Lord Strathcona's Horse during the Boer War.⁴¹ While it is correct that both were veterans of the Boer War and members of Lord Strathcona's Horse, the then Lieutenant Colonel Steele commanded the unit, while Trooper Stewart was a 'green' twenty-two year old recruit, who by his own admission, barely made it in on account of questions as to his physical fitness.⁴² Trooper Stewart did fulfil his contract, serving in South Africa for just over a year, but his personnel records detail nothing beyond this.⁴³ Trooper Stewart and Lieutenant Colonel Steele would have met, but in consideration of the military protocol of the day, there is no reason to believe their relationship extended beyond that of an officer and an enlisted man. This does not minimize Stewart's importance to the community, nor his importance to Lethbridge's military history. The reality is, however, that his success was rooted more in his social position, political affiliations, and leadership abilities than in real military prowess.

Following the Boer War, Stewart, who had previously lived in Edmonton, attended the University of Toronto and studied dentistry. In 1902, he moved to Lethbridge where he started a dental practice.⁴⁴ In terms of the existing circle of social elite in the community, Stewart was a natural fit. He was of British heritage, an educated

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Major-General John Smith Stewart, *Memoirs of a Soldier* (Lethbridge: Robins Southern Printing Ltd., 1979), ii-iii.

⁴³ "Boer War Service Records for 255 Trooper John Smith Stewart," *Library and Archives Canada*, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/south-african-war-1899-1902/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=12545&>.

⁴⁴ Stewart, ii-iii.

young professional, and a veteran of the Boer War. In his memoirs, Stewart spoke to his upbringing: “In my father’s house the heritage which was greatly spoken of and revered was the British heritage. In our home we were taught that there was one flag, one throne and that there was no one to whom we could be more loyal than the Queen or the King.”⁴⁵ Born and educated in Ontario, Stewart was the benefactor of the pro-imperialism curriculum prominent at that time and he credited his education in being influential in the formation of his beliefs, attitudes, and values as an adult. His memoirs detail his receiving first place in an essay competition, which challenged students to speak to the greatness of the British Empire. Stewart quoted a section of his prize winning essay as follows: “There have been many great Empires in the past, but in this century there is only one that is truly great. It is that Empire whose boundaries reach from pole to pole, whose Navy rides the mighty deep, and whose sons and daughters gladly proclaim the British Empire.” In summation, Stewart stated that he believed in “one flag, one throne, one Empire.”⁴⁶

When he received command of the 25th Battery on 1 February 1908, Major J.S. Stewart was thirty years old and had been living in the community for approximately six years. Although there were men with more military experience within the community, it was Stewart’s social and political connections, combined with his leadership abilities and enthusiasm for the venture that made him a logical choice. In his time as commanding officer of the 25th Battery and later during his First World War service, Stewart played a significant role in nearly every aspect of the military experience of Lethbridge and area. During the militia years, he personally attended to most of the recruiting and day-to-day

⁴⁵ Ibid, i.

⁴⁶ Ibid, ii.

operational requirements of the unit, including offering his own home as the office and meeting place for much of the battery's existence.⁴⁷ He served as the unit's spokesman to the local newspapers and led the battery at every public appearance. For members of the community, John Smith Stewart was the face of the militia.

While the importance of Stewart to the history of the 25th Battery cannot be overstated, his role is not unusual when compared to other militia commanders across Canada. The unique role of these Canadian militia officers is documented in a letter written by British Major General Gascoigne, GOC (General Officer Commanding of the Canadian Militia), which read in part;

Canadian militia officers are amateurs in a sense of largely maintaining the militia with money out of their own pockets. They are part and parcel of the people and contribute their time and money to charitable, religious, municipal and political affairs. In consequence their treatment as soldiers must be somewhat different from the treatment of army officers, who are professional soldiers and nothing else. Our militia officers usually occupy the leading positions, professional, mercantile and social, in the various localities where they reside. They devote their time and money to maintain the militia corps, and without them there would be no militia...At reviews, inspections, and when training, militia officers expect to be treated as soldiers – citizen soldiers, and not like mercenaries.

When addressing a commanding officer in Canada, he (the GOC) is addressing one who feels himself subordinate in a military sense only, and is perhaps conscious that he has done, or is doing in his sphere, more for the militia than the GOC who is addressing him. Militia officers, like the rank-and-file, are amateurs, and if the GOC would realize this and act accordingly, we would not have such frequent changes in the command of the militia.⁴⁸

Much of the content of Gascoigne's letter can be applied to Major Stewart's role, both within the battery and in the greater community. He embraced the British-centric and imperialistic official identity, while serving as a role model for the enlisted men. His influence within the community was wide reaching, as evidenced by his election as

⁴⁷ Ibid, iii.

⁴⁸ Wood, 56.

Lethbridge's Member of the Legislative Assembly in 1911.⁴⁹ When selecting junior officers for the battery, Stewart chose members of Lethbridge's social elite, many of whom already held prominent positions within the community. The 1914 listing of officers included among others Captain Alvin Ripley (postmaster and alderman), Lieutenant Frank Mewburn (son of former mayor Dr. F.H. Mewburn), and Lieutenant Charles Richard Magrath Godwin (nephew of first mayor and former member of parliament, Charles A. Magrath).⁵⁰ When examined as a group, the seven officers selected by Major Stewart in 1914 represented the new urban, decidedly pro-British character of Lethbridge's official identity. All were of British descent, well educated, and highly placed in local society. None were of the 'sturdy Canuck' frontier stock that had been so highly regarded in the North West Rebellion and Boer War. This was also one of the most striking contrasts between the urban 25th Battery and the rural 23rd Alberta Rangers.

A second misconception relating to the 25th Battery is rooted in the larger myth of the frontier. In November 1907 when recruiting commenced, the demographics of the community had changed markedly from the pre-Boer War era. The frontier town had grown into a city that was an economic hub. The mining town was now the third largest city in the province and agriculture, transportation, and industrial interests had expanded as well. Although automobiles could be seen in the city, horses were still the primary means by which agricultural, industrial, and personal transportation were effected. The typical frontier type cowboy was now mainly a rural phenomenon and not a regular sight on the streets of Lethbridge. Consequently, recruits for the 25th Battery were typically

⁴⁹ Stewart, v.

⁵⁰ Ibid, iv-v.

more urban, while the 23rd Alberta Rangers were comprised of recruits that were more in line with the image of the frontier cowboy. This demographic change is not reflected in the official history of the Canadian artillery, as authored by G.W.L. Nicholson.

Nicholson's first volume of *The Gunners of Canada* provides a short account of the history of the western batteries, as taken from an interview conducted by the author with Brigadier General Stewart in 1964. Nicholson notes that the artillery unit was not placed in Lethbridge by accident and that in fact Sam Steele "picked Lethbridge as the home of the new battery because, being in the heart of the ranching country, it had no lack of good horses and good cowboys."⁵¹

When this statement is compared with Lieutenant Colonel Mewburn's speech, a distinction is made between horsemanship and the cowboy image. He notes that in terms of recruiting and training, "At that time in the development of the West the man or boy who could not ride or handle horses was hard to find, so we did not have to teach the men how to ride or drive."⁵² Well trained horses were readily available in much of Southwestern Alberta, including Lethbridge. The men who joined the battery were not cowboys, but were pre-dominantly individuals who resided in the city and worked in various occupations that required some knowledge of horsemanship – be it hauling coal from the mines or delivering milk, bread, or produce – most of this was accomplished using a horse and wagon. In his memoirs, John Smith Stewart notes that the utilisation of a horse and wagon was key to the success of his travelling dental practice.⁵³

⁵¹ G.W.L. Nicholson, *The Gunners of Canada: The History of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery Volume I 1534-1919* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1967), 179.

⁵² F.H.H. Mewburn, "The 25th Battery Canadian Field Artillery" (presentation, Reserve of Officers Mess Dinner, Edmonton, AB, 1938).

⁵³ Stewart, iii.

The first call for men and horses to fill the ranks of the new battery occurred immediately after its initial authorisation on 7 November 1907. In a *Lethbridge Herald* article published one week later, it was reported that Major Stewart had received an enthusiastic response to the call for recruits. The *Herald* noted that: “The enrollment in the newly formed battery of field artillery has been rapidly going on. Already there are one hundred and fourteen names enrolled, besides the four officers. Men and horses are being promised also from Taber and Raymond. As only one hundred and six men are required to complete the battery it will be seen that commanding officer Stewart will have plenty of men from which to choose his number.”⁵⁴ From early reports, it would appear that recruiting for the battery would be a competitive process with numerous individuals vying for a spot in the unit prior to the annual training exercise in Calgary.

In reviewing subsequent articles in the *Herald* from 1907-14, as well as accounts written by battery insiders, it becomes apparent that recruiting a full complement of qualified individuals was, in fact, an ongoing challenge. Mewburn explained these early challenges as follows; “The rate of recruiting varied. In the beginning it was usually slow until a few days before leaving for camp, when a rush would start, and in an evening or two more than half the establishment would be taken on strength. In that era training at local headquarters was not an essential for a man to proceed to camp and even medical inspection was not held until after we arrived.”⁵⁵ Even with the relaxed recruiting practices, it was still a challenge for the battery’s officers to reach their quota for training camp and as a result, there came a time when Lethbridge City Council offered to provide

⁵⁴ “Many Men Enrolled,” *Lethbridge Herald*, November 14, 1907.

⁵⁵ F.H.H. Mewburn, “The 25th Battery Canadian Field Artillery” (presentation, Reserve of Officers Mess Dinner, Edmonton, AB, 1938).

a fifteen cent per day supplement to the recruit's militia salary of sixty cents per day. In addition to the logistical benefits of raising and keeping a full complement of recruits, it was hoped that fewer 'last minute' additions might lead to a better performance during artillery competitions, an ongoing problem which will be discussed later.

The officers of the battery did not experience high turnover and the core group, as identified earlier, remained intact for the nearly seven years that the battery existed. Due to a lack of reliable recordkeeping and a high turnover rate within the battery, it is difficult to ascertain demographic information relating to the enlisted men. Unlike the units which participated in the Boer War and later in the First World War that kept detailed nominal rolls, the only known list of members of the 25th Battery is a 1914 Summer Training Camp Pay List, held in the National Archives. Unlike the wartime nominal rolls, the pay list does not include fields of entry for nationality, marital status, place of residence, religion, or any other demographic markers. What it does provide is a reasonably comprehensive list of names, ranks, and salaries for battery members who attended the June 1914 training camp in Calgary.

Among the recognizable names from within the community, most often of British origin, some unexpected surnames, which are more associated with 'non-conforming' community identities, are also noted: Pollakowsky, Zeiser, Geiger, Baceda, Hempel, Ott, and Schumacher.⁵⁶ A check of contemporary census records note that the ethnic roots of these names include German, Austrian, Ukrainian, and Russian origins – the community identity groups who were generally combined and referred to as Slavs.⁵⁷ Of the 148

⁵⁶ There likely could be other men of central or eastern European origin on this roll, however, no others were obviously discernible to the author.

⁵⁷ The term 'Slavs' is used regularly by the *Herald* and prominent members of Lethbridge's social and political elite to describe anyone of central or eastern European origin.

enlisted men on the 1914 payroll, only seven have surnames that were are identifiable as being of Central or Eastern European origin, which indicates that fewer than 5% of the battery was comprised of individuals of ‘non-conforming’ community identities.

With little contextual information, few conclusions can be drawn. However, it is evident that there was at least some interest among these community identities in participation in the militia, and that there was some degree of acceptance of these groups within the battery. It would be interesting to ascertain whether these individuals were long term members or ‘last minute’ recruits, but unfortunately, there is no further information available. The only other means by which the demographics of the 25th Battery can be examined relates to a list of twenty-five members of the battery who formed the first contingent sent from Lethbridge for service in the First World War. More demographic information is available on these men and this information will be included as part of a larger analysis in subsequent chapters.

Yet another myth or misconception about the 25th Battery relates to its overall performance during the yearly training exercises, which included, among other elements, sham battles and efficiency testing. In his memoirs, John Smith Stewart noted that a high point for the battery occurred in the summer of 1914, when following attendance at the Calgary camp, where the battery fired live shells for the first time, the artillery association awarded the Gzowski Cup to the 25th Battery to commemorate their second place finish in a dominion-wide manoeuvres competition.⁵⁸ This was a major accomplishment for the battery, which just four years previously had finished in 22nd place for overall efficiency.⁵⁹ Since the battery was first established in 1908, the historical narrative has

⁵⁸ Stewart, v.

⁵⁹ “Good Record of Our New Battery,” *Lethbridge Herald*, August 27, 1910.

evolved to put forth Lethbridge as an ‘artillery town,’ which had housed a thriving and successful unit from its very inception. Nothing could be further from the truth, as the fledgling unit’s struggle to recruit and keep a full complement of qualified members was reflected in the relatively poor performance they demonstrated in annual competitions. This challenge was further exacerbated with the problems associated with the outdated equipment that they were issued. These issues were not unique to the 25th Battery, but were an ongoing problem for militia units across the nation. Nicholson noted that the problem with obsolete equipment was more pronounced in the west as new units like the 25th Battery, often inherited second hand equipment from the permanent or more established militia forces.⁶⁰

For its part, the Lethbridge *Herald* reported the activities of the 25th Battery, with a particular emphasis on the annual summer training camps, with an attitude ranging from cheerful optimism to blatant boosterism. Following the battery’s 22nd place finish in 1910, the *Herald* published an article prior to camp the next year, which put the best possible spin on the previous year’s results, while looking forward to better showing that year. The article read in part, “This year they should do even better work as a large number of the old officers and men will go again, and if the new recruits sign up early...there is no reason why they should not eclipse last year’s record.”⁶¹ In examining the reportage of the *Herald* during the militia years, it is evident that the tone remained consistently positive, optimistic, and encouraging and in fairness, the battery did make improvements year-to-year, culminating with their winning of the Gzowski Cup. It is difficult to speculate as to what the future of the militia battery may have held as the First

⁶⁰ Nicholson, 179-80.

⁶¹ “To Instruct The Battery,” *Lethbridge Herald*, May 23, 1911.

World War broke out just months after their record performance at the 1914 camp. What is more evident, however, is that during its nearly seven year history, the 25th Battery certainly impacted the evolution of imagined community and reinforced the British- and imperial-centric official identity. This occurred not so much during the relatively short period of official training, but more in the battery's participation in public events, which showcased its greater role within the community.

During the battery's existence, the coverage of their activities in the *Lethbridge Herald* was relegated primarily to yearly reports on recruiting for the summer training camp and a summary of the results achieved in competitions. This coverage included a handful of articles each year, and although short in number, they were generally long on rhetoric. The tone of the coverage of the 25th Battery's annual activities is exemplified by a 24 June 1910 article entitled "Artillery Corps Will Parade On Return From the Camp To-Morrow Afternoon," which begins as follows: "Lethbridge's conquering heroes will parade on the Galt Square tomorrow afternoon when the train bringing the 25th Battery home from camp at Calgary, where they have been for the past two weeks, arrives." The article continues on, noting that the mayor had telegraphed Major Stewart to request a formal parade upon their return so that their efforts could be publically acknowledged.⁶²

There is no mention of the specific results achieved by the battery, other than an earlier article which expressed hope that they could improve on their 22nd place finish from the year before.⁶³ In terms of the *Herald's* coverage, it is evident that actual achievement was secondary to the construction of an image of returning heroes being

⁶² "Artillery Corps Will Parade On Return From the Camp To-Morrow Afternoon," *Lethbridge Herald*, June 24, 1910.

⁶³ "Battery Leaves Tuesday Morning," *Lethbridge Herald*, June 11, 1910.

welcomed home by an enthusiastic and supportive community. In looking forward to the parade, the article concludes by stating: “No doubt a big crowd will be out to see the warriors return tanned and hardened, if not battle-scarred.”⁶⁴ In perpetuating the image of the returning heroes, the Lethbridge *Herald* is furthering the agenda of the British- and imperial-centric official identity and the romantic and idealistic notion of the battery’s place within the imagined community.

In terms of the battery’s role in the furtherance of imagined community and the imposition of official identity, the previous article would indicate that there was coordination between city officials, battery officers, and decision-makers at the Lethbridge *Herald*. While this particular public appearance was sold to the public as a ‘homecoming’ event, other appearances which received coverage in the local newspapers during the battery’s existence were more closely tied to concepts of imperialism, nationalism, and militarism. According to Kilford, the first public gunnery demonstration occurred on 20 May 1910, when members of the 25th Battery fired a 67 gun salute to mark the funeral of King Edward VII.⁶⁵ Kilford’s claim is cited to the 1938 Mewburn speech, however, an examination of the Lethbridge *Herald* archives revealed an apparent contradiction to this claim. The *Herald* indicates that on 1 July 1908, just months after the battery’s formation, the unit was to fire their guns as part of Lethbridge’s Dominion Day celebrations.⁶⁶ Assuming that this article is correct, the first use of the 25th Battery as a means to further official identity occurred nearly two years before the event documented by Mewburn. As the battery had only been formed exactly five months prior

⁶⁴ “Artillery Corps Will Parade On Return From the Camp To-Morrow Afternoon,” *Lethbridge Herald*, June 24, 1910.

⁶⁵ Kilford, 15.

⁶⁶ “The City Band,” *Lethbridge Herald*, June 30, 1908.

to Dominion Day, it appears that officials wasted no time in placing the new battery prominently before the community.

Following their initial Dominion Day appearance, the battery did play a prominent role as part of Canada's observance of Edward VII's funeral. On 16 May 1910, the Lethbridge *Herald* published an article which detailed the agenda for the day's activities. It described the role which the 25th Battery would play on 20 May, where batteries across Canada would fire minute guns at specific intervals, coinciding with those fired in London at noon local time.⁶⁷ The idea was that the salute would be precisely timed and sounded across the empire to mark the king's passing, but according to Mewburn, Lethbridge's contribution did not go off as planned. Mewburn remembered the situation as follows:

Since we have been getting broadcasts direct from England, I am sure now that on that occasion we made a miscalculation and fired our salute just twelve hours late. The minute guns were to be fired simultaneously throughout the Empire at a point in the funeral ceremonies which took place in the early afternoon. We know now that this time of day in England is around seven or eight o'clock in the morning in Alberta. We fired the salute about that time in the evening. However, the error apparently passed unnoticed, and anyway it did not spoil the ceremony from the battery's point of view.⁶⁸

It is likely that the public was not aware of the mistimed local observance of the king's funeral and even if they were, it may not have mattered that much. What was more important was that the salute fired by the 25th Battery offered a tangible means of participation in a larger event that connected them to others as Canadians and as citizens of the Empire.

⁶⁷ F.H.H. Mewburn, "The 25th Battery Canadian Field Artillery" (presentation, Reserve of Officers Mess Dinner, Edmonton, AB, 1938).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

This connection was further strengthened in 1911 when the battery participated in a similar nationwide marking of King George V's coronation,⁶⁹ and once again in October 1912, where they took a prominent place in the official welcome of Governor General Lord Minto to Southern Alberta.⁷⁰ The 25th Battery also represented the city in less formal events, including the 1912 inaugural Calgary Stampede parade.⁷¹

In June 1914, the 25th Battery attended the annual militia training camp in Calgary for the last time. On 27 June, the Lethbridge *Herald* published an article marking their return, which began as follows; "After a most strenuous campaign and one that could hardly be outdone in actual warfare so far as the testing of brain and brawn figures, the 25th Battery of the Canadian Field Artillery, with Major Dr. J.S. Stewart in command, returned home yesterday afternoon..."⁷² The article could be seen as yet another in a succession of like pieces that used rhetoric to build up the battery's reputation within the community. It was the timing of this article that was most unfortunate. Less than twenty-four hours after the *Herald's* assertion that the circumstances and conditions faced by the battery during summer training could not be outdone by those of actual warfare, the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo, which touched off a nearly two month march to world war.

As a militia unit, the battery had been formed for home defence purposes only. However, as Wood asserts, "effective defence of any particular part of the Empire might,

⁶⁹ "Ask Battery to Come Here," *Lethbridge Herald*, May 23, 1911.

⁷⁰ "His Royal Highness Was Pleased With the Review," *Lethbridge Herald*, October 10, 1912.

⁷¹ A photograph, allegedly of Major Stewart and the 25th Battery, marching through downtown Calgary is held at the Glenbow Archives. It is difficult to say with certainty that the unit in the photograph is the 25th, as no artillery guns are present. The author could find no documentary evidence to suggest that the battery did or did not participate in the first Calgary Stampede parade, and so this 'myth' remains unresolved for now.

⁷² "Local Soldiers Return From Camp," *Lethbridge Herald*, June 27, 1914.

in time of emergency, require the armies of the self-governing dominions to become mutually supporting.”⁷³ By August 1914, Canadian military officials were moving to disband the militia units and move their personnel into the newly formed Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF). The CEF would join other like dominion forces in fighting alongside and under the ultimate command of the Imperial British Army. Benedict Anderson speaks to the imperial-colonial military duality as follows:

One had the ‘First Army,’ recruited by conscription on a mass, citizen, metropolitan base; ideologically conceived as defenders of the *heimat* (homeland); dressed in practical, utilitarian khaki; armed with the latest affordable weapons; in peacetime isolated in barracks, in war stationed in trenches or behind heavy field guns...one had the ‘Second Army,’ recruited...on a mercenary basis; ideologically conceived as an internal police force; dressed to kill in bed – or ballroom; armed with swords and obsolete industrial weapons; in peace on display, in war on horseback.⁷⁴

The citizens of Lethbridge looked to the 25th Battery as a tangible representation of the aspirational and ceremonial aspects of militarism. This is further evidenced in August 1914 when a contingent from the soon to be defunct battery was selected to be among the first Canadians to fight on the battlefields of the Western Front.⁷⁵ Subsequent chapters of this thesis will examine the Lethbridge and area First World War experience in terms of the merger of official identity with imagined wartime community, including the specific experiences of both conforming and non-conforming community identities.

⁷³ Wood, 169.

⁷⁴ Anderson, 151-52.

⁷⁵ “Local Battery Boys are Chosen,” *Lethbridge Herald*, August 15, 1914.

Chapter 3 – Great War Imaginings: Pride, Prejudice, and Propaganda

By the summer of 1914, the process of Euro-American colonization in Southwestern Alberta had been ongoing for half a century. The community that Robert Rutherford described as “transplanted, not transformed” was about to undergo a metamorphosis that would reaffirm the imposed imperialistic official identity and bring together a disparate group of citizens in a shared experience so profound that the effect on the sense of imagined community was nearly immediate and all encompassing. Benedict Anderson spoke to the evolution of imagined community as a process which included three distinct phases. It begins with the community being imagined or invented, followed by a period of modelling and adaptation, and concludes with transformation.¹ According to Anderson, the analysis of this three-phase process “has necessarily been concerned primarily with social change and different forms of consciousness. But it is doubtful whether either social change or transformed consciousnesses, in themselves, do much to explain the *attachment* that peoples feel for the inventions of their imaginations – or, to revive a question raised at the beginning of this text – why people are ready to die for these inventions.”² The imagined wartime community embraced by many of the citizens of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta did indeed provide a sense of place, purpose, and belonging so deep that not only were individuals prepared to die, but they were also willing to risk the lives of their loved ones.

While the imposed official identity had remained fairly consistent in nature during the half century preceding the First World War, the development of imagined community

¹ This process as identified by Anderson was applied to the concepts of nation and nationalism. However, in this thesis, the concepts are specifically applied to the evolution of imagined community in a regional and city-type context.

² Anderson, 141.

in Southwestern Alberta is not as easy to delineate or define. It can be best understood by using Anderson's three-phase process model and applying this to events outlined in previous chapters. In Chapter One, the community is imagined/invented when the original Blackfoot territory, now known as Southwestern Alberta, became populated by white settlers, particularly those associated with the whiskey trade, the North West Mounted Police, and the early coal mining industry. The latter portions of Chapter One along with Chapter Two, speak to Anderson's modelling and adaption period, during which the frontier community was further delineated into distinct rural and urban spaces and the single-resource company town of Coalbanks/Lethbridge became the economic hub of the larger region. Other important parts of this modelling/adaption phase include increased immigration, economic boom and bust periods, completion of the railway, and the expansion of agriculture and industry. Perhaps the most influential aspects of this phase, in terms of the later First World War transformation period, was the local participation in the Boer War and the subsequent establishment of the permanent militia units, both of which instilled a military *ethos* in the community. This likely made the transformation of imagined wartime community more immediate and all encompassing.

The embracement of imagined community is never unanimous, nor without dissent. It is, rather, a sense of place and greater purpose with elements of shared history, culture, beliefs, values, and traditions. In examining the community's response during the early weeks of the First World War and placing them within the broader national context, it becomes evident that the experiences of Lethbridge and area, although very much in support of national and imperial policy, were distinctive and unique. One element that did remain consistent with past experiences was the influence exerted by the community's social, economic, and political elite. By 1914, the original community founders who

occupied these positions had been joined by a new generation who were just as ambitious and influential. Most prominent among these ‘newcomers’ were Mayor W.D.L. Hardie, Major John Smith Stewart, and William Ashbury Buchanan.

William Duncan Livingstone Hardie served as Mayor of Lethbridge from 1913 to 1928. Born in Scotland, Hardie arrived in the area in 1889. As a university-educated mine engineer, Hardie was much in demand within the industry and worked for several companies in North America before settling permanently in Lethbridge in 1894.³ His education, socio-economic status, and pedigree helped to make him a more than suitable candidate for acceptance into the community’s elite. During the years of the First World War, Hardie was a supporter of all aspects of the war effort and continually worked to ensure that the contribution of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta was maintained locally and recognized throughout the Dominion. He served as the engineering officer in the Lethbridge Home Guard and in the fall of 1916, made a public pledge to enroll as an officer in the city’s newly formed infantry battalion.⁴ Hardie had demonstrated that he was not simply a ‘puppet’ for the elite members of the community and although much of the content of his speeches and other public actions were consistent with the imposed official identity and steeped in national and imperial doctrine, he was independent-minded as well.

The Ontario-born Major John Smith Stewart was also a prominent citizen in the community and a member of the new generation of the social, economic, and political elite. Perhaps his greatest contribution to the community came through the establishment

³ Biographical material pertaining to W.D.L. Hardie was sourced from his family’s fond at the Galt Museum & Archives in Lethbridge, Alberta.

⁴ Kilford, 28.

of the permanent militia presence in the form of the 25th Battery. For Lethbridge and the surrounding area, Major Stewart was the face of the military. When war was declared in August 1914, it was only natural that most everyone would turn to him for information and guidance in this uncertain and exciting time. Although Major Stewart handled this leadership role well, his 'real' military experience was actually much smaller than many other citizens in the community. It was the air of authority that came from his rank and position within the militia that gave him the credibility and gravitas to be held up as the local 'commander-in-chief.' During the early months of the war, Stewart was directly involved in all decision-making within the community and represented Lethbridge and area on both the provincial and national levels. As an enthusiastic proponent of the imposed official identity and Lethbridge's Member of the Legislative Assembly, he enjoyed the support of the social and economic elite and the respect and admiration of a good number of the enlisted men and their friends and family. In terms of imagined wartime community, Major Stewart occupied an almost heroic position before the first shot was ever fired.

Although Hardie and Stewart occupied important roles within the real and imagined wartime community of Lethbridge, the most influential of the three was William Ashbury Buchanan. As owner-editor of the *Herald*, he had the last word on everything that was published and as his newspaper was the primary source of information for the citizens of Lethbridge and area. It was Buchanan who would decide on how the war effort was to be portrayed.

In general terms and certainly on the local level, there is no denying the influence of print media, more specifically the daily newspaper, on the perception of the war. In examining this influence, it becomes evident that for many, if not all newspapers of the

period, the content of editorials and articles related to the war involved the dissemination of propaganda, coupled with state-sponsored censorship. Throughout history, the word propaganda has acquired rather negative connotations, but in fact, it is simply the purposeful use of bias to promote or publicise a cause or viewpoint. Paul Rutherford prefers to use the term ‘mythmaking,’ rather than ‘propaganda,’ in his examination of newspapers in Victorian Canada. He quotes Graeme Patterson’s notions of the mythmaking process, explaining that myth is “a complex of symbols and images imbedded in narrative, which works as a sort of lens or screen, whereby certain features of a subject are ignored or suppressed, while others are emphasized or distinctively organized. Shared myths can serve to promote group identities, cultural stability, and social harmony, to legitimate status systems and power structures, and even to justify social and political revolution.”⁵ Both Rutherford’s and Patterson’s ideas related to mythmaking are useful in terms of explaining the influence of newspapers on the both the national and local First World War experience, but in the context of this thesis, the term ‘propaganda’ is used exclusively.

In terms of the history of the dissemination of propaganda relating to the Canadian First World War experience, Jeff Keshen’s *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada’s Great War* is considered by many to be the leading work in the field. In speaking to the depth and breadth of the influence of Canadian media and communication on the public’s perception of the First World War, Keshen asserts that:

Words and images from privately-controlled means of communication both reflected and intensified a mass psyche largely disposed towards imperialist, romantic and nativist beliefs. From 1914 to 1918, citizens, primarily, but not exclusively in English-Canada, were told that the war constituted an exhilarating competition played by the bold and the chivalrous; that death in a just cause ensured eternal life; that through his

⁵ Rutherford, 171.

noble sacrifice, Johnny Canuck was forging a record of renown; and that the Germans were not just extraordinarily fiendish, but had countless fifth columnists working on their behalf. Thus, thousands of newspaper editors, journalists, advertisers, theatre owners, church leaders, academics, authors and book publishers all helped convince Canadians that they had a legal and historical obligation to aid the mother country, a moral responsibility to uphold democracy, and a right if not obligation to suppress those *legitimately* assumed as unpatriotic.⁶

Keshen speaks to the idea of a ‘mass psyche,’ predisposed to “imperialist, romantic and nativist beliefs.” In terms of the experiences of Lethbridge and area and in the context of this work, the term ‘imagined community’ could be substituted for ‘mass psyche,’ and ‘official identity’ is in this case compatible with Keshen’s description of “imperialist, romantic and nativist beliefs.” In an effort to identify and analyse the effects of media, communication, and propaganda on a more local and regional level, Keshen’s work is important in providing a national context and in limiting the focus to the specific themes of pride, patriotism, prejudice, and paranoia. The focus will be further narrowed to early weeks of the war and will centre upon the influence and actions of Mayor Hardie, Major Stewart, and William Buchanan.

As war loomed in Europe during the summer of 1914, Lethbridge and area, like many parts of Canada, was experiencing a difficult period of economic decline. Although it would seem that impending war would add to the gloom, it in fact had the opposite effect. The pages of the Lethbridge *Herald* during the weeks preceding the war, as well as its competitor, the weekly Lethbridge *Telegram* included several articles relating to the situation on the international and national levels. These were usually clipped from other newspapers or purchased from the Western Associated Press and few had a local flavour, with the exception of an occasional interview with Major Stewart relating to the readiness

⁶ Jeffrey Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada’s Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996), 24-25.

of the 25th Battery should war be declared. Major Stewart would have or certainly should have known that the city's militia unit was for home defence purposes only.⁷ If and when Canada raised an expeditionary force, a new command structure and new units would have to be established. Yet, well beyond the 4 August 1914 declaration of war and the eventual disbandment of the 25th Battery in favour of the new overseas units, Major Stewart continued to allow the people of Lethbridge to believe that their original artillery battery was still functioning as a unit and would get to the Western Front. In retrospect, this could be perceived as a small detail overlooked in a hectic time, but it is more likely that keeping the 25th Battery alive in the hearts and minds of the community was helpful in propping up their imagined identity as an 'artillery town,' thus boosting sentiments of pride and patriotism.

While Major Stewart was reminding the community that should war be declared, Lethbridge being an established 'artillery town' would have a significant role to play, the local newspapers were ramping up emotions with sensational headlines as exemplified by the front page of the 1 August 1914 issue of the Lethbridge *Herald* entitled "World War Only Matter Of Hours." Other articles clearly linked the impending war in Europe with the community, suggesting that the 25th Battery was ready and willing to mobilise immediately. By the time war was officially declared on 4 August, much of the community was looking to local leadership, especially Hardie, Stewart, and Buchanan to ascertain what was to come for the city.

⁷ According to G.W.L. Nicholson in his work, *The Gunners of Canada*, Stewart indicated to him in an interview that he did receive a telegram from Sir Sam Hughes to the effect that the 25th would provide a draft of men and would then turn in their guns and stand down. This is not reflected in a single media account, nor is it included in Stewart's memoirs or the related local military historiography.

The patriotic anticipation which set the mood for Lethbridge in August 1914 was not unique. Tim Cook notes that in many communities across Canada, “Canadians took to the streets in an orgy of military pageantry.”⁸ Keshen notes that across the nation, communities large and small were experiencing a similar flood of patriotism, commenting that; “The heady days of August 1914 promised much. Even the festivities commemorating Canada’s entry into the war seemed symbolic. Almost everyone lent their voices to support this noble venture, prompting some to conclude that the apparent unity heralded a fresh start within a society recently plagued by increasingly bitter socio-economic and racial divisions.”⁹ Keshen’s analysis supports Anderson’s contention that for imagined community, war is perhaps the greatest unifying and transformative force. An examination of specific events occurring in Lethbridge and area in August 1914 reveals that the First World War had a near immediate transformative effect on the establishment of a cohesive imagined community. The development of a cohesive imagined community does not require complete or unanimous support of all citizens, but rather a sharing of common beliefs, values, and purpose of the majority. As Keshen notes, in the context of his analysis on the public mood in the early days of the war, “To oppose participation in such a hallowed campaign appeared akin to lunacy.”¹⁰ By identifying and examining the early defining moments of the Lethbridge and area First World War experience, it becomes evident that the local mass psyche or imagined community was built upon emotional foundations that range from pride and patriotism to paranoia and prejudice.

⁸ Cook, *At the Sharp End*, 21.

⁹ Keshen, 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Public demonstrations of pride and patriotism were frequent during the early months of the war and continued throughout the war years, although they were more measured in tone and less common in occurrence after 1914. The local events of August 1914 were in large part orchestrated by Mayor Hardie, Major Stewart, and William Buchanan, who as editor of the primary news source in the community, wielded the majority of the influence. As Keshen contends, “From the first shot to the final artillery salvo, Canadian communication networks reflected and augmented imperialist and romantic notions of duty, honour and warfare...Having firmly established its roots by the early twentieth century, the print- and pictorial-based mass media held extraordinary and unprecedented power to produce and retain such opinions.”¹¹ In Lethbridge, this process began with an article published just hours after war was officially declared, which reported that “Intense excitement over the war situation continues to prevail...The greatest event of the century, Britain’s declaration of war against Germany, was awaited last night with feverish suspense. With every despatch received at the Herald office, the crowd outside the door thronged about the bulletin board and the feeling ran at a high pitch until a late hour.”¹² From this moment forward, Buchanan’s *Herald* controlled the local narrative, both in terms of the tone and content of the news received by citizens and in how the community’s war experience was documented and portrayed.

With regard to the larger theme of pride and patriotism, a 5 August 1914 article in the *Herald* entitled “Lethbridge Proclaims Her Loyalty To The Great British Empire,” documents the local response to the declaration of war as follows:

Amidst excitement which baffles description, the despatch stating that Germany had declared war on Great Britain was megaphoned to the eagerly waiting crowd. The

¹¹ Ibid, 11.

¹² “Lethbridge Proclaims Her Loyalty To The Great British Empire” *Lethbridge Herald*, August 5, 1914.

people listened in tense silence until the despatch was finished and then one yell – you could not describe it as a cheer – rent the air, hats were thrown sky high and for a moment the people went mad. Many a deeply muttered “Thank God” was heard as everyone realised that Great Britain, true to her past traditions, meant to carry out her obligations in the spirit in which they were made, as well as to the letter, no matter at what cost to herself.¹³

Although similar toned articles would appear in the newspaper in the weeks and months that followed, it was in these early days that the imagined wartime community was transformed and melded with the existing imposed official identity. The article went on to describe in great detail a patriotic parade that winded its way through the streets and included the Citizen’s Band and the Lethbridge Fire Department, accompanied by citizens waving flags to showcase their unbridled patriotism. The excited throngs congregated outside of the *Herald’s* offices to hear bulletins, which were followed by more cheering, fireworks, and rockets.¹⁴

When the crowd called upon the ‘popular mayor’ for a speech, Mayor Hardie was well prepared, delivering a passionate message that supported the narrative put forth by Buchanan’s *Herald*:

Ladies and gentlemen and fellow subjects of the British Empire, you are assembled now at the most momentous moment in the history of the British Empire, to which it is our proud privilege to belong. The war has been thrust on us, we have not sought it. But now it has come we are ready and I know that every citizen of the City of Lethbridge is ready to do his duty at any sacrifice to himself. The German Kaiser has been going around for some time with a chip on his shoulder and the time has come for us to knock that chip off. The Kaiser has been seeking trouble and has now started something, and I tell you, citizens of Lethbridge, that by the time the trouble is over there will be no Kaiser and we will have put the ‘Dutchman’ where he belongs.¹⁵

The mayor’s speech had obviously been prepared in advance and was similar in content to propaganda pieces being delivered across Canada. When combined with the

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

news bulletins being megaphoned from the *Herald's* office, the inspirational music being played by the local bands, and the images of the king and other patriotic materials being flashed on the screens of the local theatres, it would have been difficult not to have been affected by the ubiquitous displays of pride and patriotism. If there was a dissenting voice in August 1914, it was not evident in the local reportage.

In addition to reporting on the news, the *Herald* provided the public with direct connections to events that were clearly more national and international in nature. An example of this manipulation of the local war experience can be found as early as 5 August 1914. In an article titled "Be at the Herald Office Tonight," local citizens are informed that; "The whole of Lethbridge is waiting – waiting for the news of the first naval engagements between the British and German fleets in the North Sea. The news may come in any time. If it is not here before the last regular edition today and comes in during the evening an extra will be issued."¹⁶ It is clear that the paper is selling many copies and as such, benefitting in an economic sense, but it is less clear as to why news of the outcome of a British-German naval battle would be compelling to residents of a landlocked prairie community. If the citizens did not have a natural connection to events occurring on a faraway sea, the Lethbridge *Herald* would provide them with one. Later in the article, it is noted that "Commissioner Grace has arranged to throw on a screen on the Bowman building, opposite the Herald, pictures of the British Navy and other patriotic slides. He has an admirable collection and it is his desire that the public get another phase of events by seeing a number of the fighting ships of the line."¹⁷

¹⁶ "Be at the Herald Office Tonight," *Lethbridge Herald*, August 5, 1914.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

A subsequent article that day, which documents more of the public celebrations notes that the fireworks and rockets, along with a water hose display by the fire department combined to “remind one of an engagement on the North Sea.” Clearly, the comparison of a fire hose display and a naval battle are rather ridiculous, but it was not always a matter of what was true and real, but of what was perceived to be true and real. The level of patriotic emotion could not be sustained indefinitely without an outlet involving a more direct form of participation.

When recruiting offices opened on 9 August 1914, Major Stewart informed the *Herald* that he had been inundated with local men hoping to secure a position with the first contingent of the newly formed Canadian Expeditionary Force. By the next day, the community’s recruiting quota of 125 men had been achieved. Stewart noted that he had received word from Ottawa that the Lethbridge men would form part of a western battery along with men from Winnipeg and Regina. The recruiting officer reported that “not more than 20 per cent of those enlisted will be accepted, not because they are unfit, but because that number will be Lethbridge’s share...it will be seen that the number to go from this city, in proportion to the number needed would be necessarily small, as every city it contributing its quota.”¹⁸ The number of recruits may have been small, but the enthusiasm for the process and the perceived honour that such early participation brought to the community was evident in the related articles that appeared in the *Herald*.

On 12 August the entire list of 127 names of potential recruits forwarded to Ottawa for final selection was printed and included each individual’s full name, age, marital status, and any related military experience. By 18 August, Ottawa had selected

¹⁸ “125 Men Enlist for Active Service,” *Lethbridge Herald*, August 12, 1914.

twenty-five men from the original list and sent word to Major Stewart that they were to proceed to Valcartier to join the 2nd Battery Canadian Field Artillery. Although the 25th Battery was now defunct, twenty-three of the twenty-five men selected to join the first contingent had belonged to the unit. They joined local British reservists as being among the first men from the community to see action in the First World War. Local citizens received news of their impending departure through an article entitled “Leave For The Front Tonight,” which read in part;

With the passing of the midnight train tonight, the local squad of volunteers for the overseas contingent of the Canadian Expeditionary Forces and the Lethbridge reservists will pass from Lethbridge. Orders for their immediate move were received by Major Stewart this morning and everything is on the move at the armoury, in preparation for the departure. The news came unexpectedly, as was anticipated, and the men will hardly be given time to say goodbye.¹⁹

Perhaps the notice from Ottawa was short, but clearly the citizens of Lethbridge had been anticipating this moment since the war was declared, as in a matter of hours, an elaborate and enthusiastic send-off was planned for the first contingent and the local reservists.

For any community, the ceremonial send-off of its citizens to war is not just a demonstration of pride and patriotism, but a means by which the expression of bonds of imagined community can be felt by all. For the citizens of Lethbridge, it had been nearly fifteen years since they had the opportunity to participate in such an event, having enthusiastically sent forth a contingent of locals to the Boer War. Since many Lethbridgians had personal and ancestral ties to Britain or continental Europe, they could identify more deeply with this cause than that of the faraway, exotic conflict in South Africa. This, coupled with the fact that many patriotic and civic organizations had been established in Lethbridge over the past decade, including the Overseas Club and the

¹⁹ “Leave For the Front Tonight,” *Lethbridge Herald*, August 18, 1914.

Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, who took a lead role in organizing the August 1914 send-off, meant that this ceremony would be even more enthusiastic and elaborate than its Boer War counterpart.

In a national context, Rutherford described such public sentiment and display as the “imagined community of August,” in his analysis of the importance of ceremonies and displays in the early days of the war. Rutherford asserts that “The send-offs to war, in this period of innocent enthusiasm, combined a fear of death with a celebration of life away from the mundane and stifling travails of home. It was a set of localized experience felt and expressed across Western societies entering the war.”²⁰ Rutherford provides further analysis relating to the print media portrayal of these early ceremonial events, noting that their reporting on send-offs “were mediated through the lens of popular journalism, which produced texts that sanitized and glorified local events, fairly detailed and comparable depictions...accumulated in city newspapers across Canada.”²¹ A close examination of the Lethbridge *Herald*'s report on the local public send-off reveals that the Lethbridge experience is very much in line with Rutherford's analysis of the national trends – both in terms in the attitudes of the citizenry and in the role of print media

Prominently displayed on the front page of the 19 August 1914 issue of the *Herald* was an article headlined “All Lethbridge Bid God Speed To Soldier Boys.” In a detailed report, the citizens of Lethbridge received the news of the community's first public send-off to the First World War. While the article was written ostensibly to document the events of the evening, it is even more telling when viewed in terms of how the newspaper presented the events to the public. Setting aside the more common use of

²⁰ Rutherford, 59.

²¹ Ibid.

patriotic rhetoric, the first notable point is the assertion that “all Lethbridge,” which can only be taken as to mean the entire community, was in attendance at the ceremony. Perhaps this would be less significant if it only appeared in the headline. However, the content of the article began with “All Lethbridge gathered at Wesley Church last night to participate in the royal send-off to Lethbridge reservists and volunteers...” The hyperbole did not end with this statement, as the report continued with the claim that “the occasion was the most momentous that this city has witnessed since the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, or in its entire history.”²²

Members of the social, political, and economic elite joined with religious leaders in presenting a succession of stirring speeches showcasing the patriotism of the community and their pride in the manly, brave volunteers who would represent them at the front. For his part, Mayor Hardie proclaimed that “These are strong and strenuous times when British manhood wants to assert itself and it could not do so better in Lethbridge than to do honour to the men who will represent the city on the great battlefields of Europe in the struggle for the right.”²³ Dr. C.F.P. Conybeare reaffirmed the community’s position within Canada and the greater British Empire in his address, which read in part, “And of Britain’s sons all can go forward with the consciousness that they are fighting for the right. The call has gone out, Australia has heard it, South Africa has heard it, and Canada will not be silent, but will take her stand beside the motherland as she did in South Africa to fight for those things which she knows to be right.”²⁴

Although leaders from both the Anglican and Methodist churches participated in the

²² “All Lethbridge Bid God Speed To Soldier Boys,” *Lethbridge Herald*, August 19, 1914.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

ceremonies, the more traditional themes of ‘pious patriotism’ were set aside in favour of political rhetoric. Reverend G.H. Cobbledick assured the crowd that this was a principled war: “Liberty and democracy pitted against despotism and autocracy. Britain and her allies were on the former, while Germany and her allies were on the latter. If liberty and democracy won, the world would continue to advance; but if despotism and autocracy were victorious, the world would go back.”²⁵ While Hardie and Conybeare had expressed the sentiments of pride and patriotism, Cobbledick provided a justification as to why this war was important and relevant to everyone.

The article represents that the high point of the evening occurred when Major Stewart stepped forward to speak on behalf of the volunteers and to address them personally and as a group. The *Herald* noted that after a prolonged period of applause, “Major Stewart spoke mostly of the boys, their loyalty, their willingness to sacrifice and their zeal for the Motherland.” He presented a list which included the name and credentials of each man, complete with a special personal word of praise. Stewart concluded his speech by stating that “There is not a man in the lot of whom I could say an ill word. All will bring honour to themselves and to their homes and country, and will never fail to do their duty.”²⁶ In delivering his speech, Stewart both honoured the volunteers of the first contingent and provided the citizenry with a sense of personal connection and direct participation. Also evident in the planning and execution of the send-off were local patriotic and social groups, more specifically the Overseas Club and the Sir Alexander Galt Chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

These groups and other similar organizations would remain active in the efforts on the home front for the duration of the war.

The article concludes in an emotional fashion, representative of the Boer War send-off fifteen years previous, noting that “Members of the battery were carried aloft on the shoulders of their comrades and cheer after cheer followed them down the platform... Three cheers and the singing of ‘God Save the King’ led by the city band, accompanied the music of the moving wheels and the Lethbridge contingent of the overseas forces had a last look at their home town that will remain with them throughout the campaign, no matter where it may take them.”²⁷ Although the city raised three full artillery batteries and an infantry battalion over the next four years, there was never a send-off to rival the magnitude of the August 1914 ceremony. This is not to say that pride and patriotism waned substantially during the war, but it would have been difficult anywhere in the nation to sustain the levels of enthusiasm exhibited that August. Another reason why future send-offs were more subdued was that no other group was sent off in the same manner as the first contingent. The other Lethbridge units began their training locally and then were transferred to camps in Calgary or Manitoba for further training before mobilization. Regardless, the impact of the public ceremonial send-off of the first contingent on the melding of official identity and imagined wartime community in Lethbridge cannot be overstated.

The increased sense of pride and patriotism evoked in the Lethbridge area during the early days of the war reaffirmed the imposed official identity, steeped in imperial policy and doctrine, and revived the adventurous and independent frontier spirit. The

²⁷ Ibid.

ubiquitous speeches delivered by public officials and military representatives during these heady days evoked patriotic fervour in large segments of society. They also contained a more troubling message. In his first public wartime speech, Mayor Hardie had reminded his audience that they were in this together as proud citizens of the empire and were certainly on the side of liberty and justice. He then identified the German Kaiser and his subjects as villains, who had been seeking trouble and that they had now gone too far and must be put back in their place. Day after day, similar sentiments were expressed in speeches and reported in the Lethbridge *Herald*, including the message from Reverend Cobbledick, who equated the British Empire as being synonymous with liberty and democracy, while the German Empire was based on principles of autocracy and despotism. This type of rhetoric delivered to large crowds of citizens who were frenzied with pride and patriotism, only served to magnify the already existing nativist attitudes and bias within the larger community. This, coupled with an imposed official identity which had not yet shed its colonial attitudes and bias towards race, language, and religion lead to an intensification of existing attitudes and behaviours, rooted in racism, in a diverse and immigrant-rich community.

In his book, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta*, Howard Palmer notes that the nativist attitudes in Alberta increased dramatically during the immigration boom of the decade immediately preceding the First World War. According to Palmer;

Despite the relative prosperity and optimism of these boom years, ethnic conflict was at times intense and stereotypes abounded as people from diverse backgrounds attempted to make sense of one another and establish relationships in a new society. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the immigration boom ended abruptly. The war crystallized the fears and anxieties about non-British immigrants which had been developing among sectors of Alberta's society since the 1880s. Both the government and private citizens used these fears to justify violating the civil rights

of several immigrant minorities. Ethnic churches, schools, newspapers, and organizations were forced to close and Canadian citizens of German and eastern European origin were deprived of their right to vote. What factors precipitated these seemingly paradoxical developments? Why would nativism emerge from a society composed of newcomers and why would Canadians trample on civil rights just as they were fighting a war for ‘freedom,’ ‘democracy,’ and ‘British principles of justice?’²⁸

Perhaps the answers to the questions raised by Palmer are less complex than one might think. The Dominion of Canada was, for the most part, a proud member of the British Empire and with the major exception of French-Canada, most communities across the nation were rooted in an official identity that was heavily influenced by imperial policy and doctrine. Those who held positions within the political, social, and economic elite were often British-born or Canadian-born of British descent. The British Empire was the largest and most far-reaching of any of the European powers and had never been accused of being demure in terms of proclaiming and embracing its own greatness. For large portions of Canada and certainly Alberta, English was the dominant vernacular. The perceived superiority of British ethnicity and the English language was evident in immigration policies of Clifford Sifton and the Laurier Government and therefore, it would not be surprising that a social structure rooted in these policies would exist in new immigrant-rich communities such as Lethbridge.

In the early days of the war, as public officials fueled sentiments of pride and patriotism, they also tended to villainize the Kaiser and in effect, all persons of German, Austrian, and Hungarian descent. In areas like Lethbridge, where cultural and ethnic distinctions had never been fully understood by the population, it was easy to conflate German, Austrian, and Hungarian descent with any of the other groups they had

²⁸ Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1982), 19.

previously referred to as simply ‘Slavs.’ A society that would segregate its Chinese population, send First Nations children to residential schools, consider Mormon settlement an ‘invasion,’ and discourage immigration of African-Americans for fear of their sexual appetites, would most likely not pause to make ethnic distinctions as to which of their neighbours of eastern European descent might be a friend or foe. Keshen explains the nativist leanings in Canada at this time as follows:

Hand-in-hand with jingoism and imperialism came the desire to ferret out and crush the unpatriotic, a tendency drawing upon the related and well-established creed of nativism. For generations, newcomers to Canada harbouring customs, beliefs or racial backgrounds preventing easy assimilation into white Anglo-Protestant society were denounced as inferior, and resented for threatening to draw the Dominion from its British roots. The war, with its emphasis upon total loyalty and conformity, intensified such intolerance.²⁹

The situation in Lethbridge and area was in many aspects, very similar in tone to the overall Canadian circumstances as described by Keshen. What is most noteworthy is the immediacy in which local citizens exhibited prejudiced attitudes and behaviour, which coupled with anxiety over an uncertain future, fuelled an escalating mood of paranoia. By examining specific anecdotal accounts relating to prejudice and paranoia in Lethbridge during this time, it becomes evident that the atmosphere in the city was very similar to that of other Canadian communities, but unique in other aspects.

The related information available originates mostly from print media sources, in this case the Lethbridge *Herald*. Keshen speaks to the influence of print media in this regard, noting that; “Besides carrying official front-line despatches, it was through their editorial pages and stories by in-house reporters and columnists that the Canadian press emerged as a propaganda source.”³⁰ For its part, the *Herald* re-printed various national

²⁹ Keshen, 5.

³⁰ Ibid, 12.

accounts of potentially subversive activities by immigrants loyal to the Kaiser and also those expounding upon the threats to infrastructure, particularly that which was used for transportation and agriculture. Pervasive within national accounts was the idea that German operatives were specifically targeting bridges, a suggestion that hit the citizenry of Lethbridge heavily as the High Level Bridge, completed in 1909, was considered an engineering marvel and a landmark in the community.

The earliest articles in the *Herald* exhibiting elements of prejudice and paranoia are focused upon reports of local citizens of German descent rushing home to join the Kaiser's forces. As early as 7 August 1914, the *Herald* printed an article titled "Four Germans Go Back To Fight," which read in part:

Four local Germans, whose names could not be learned, left last night for New York via Winnipeg. All were said to be reservists, and had been formally notified that they were required at home. If they reach New York, and there is some doubt as to whether they will or not, they will embark at that port for Germany to join their regiments. It is thought that they stand a very slight chance of getting back to the Fatherland, but they were quite willing to accept the chance at their own risk. It is understood that all German reservists residing in the city have received instructions from the German consul at Winnipeg to proceed toward the base of activities, but so far as is known, these four are the only ones who have.³¹

The information is vague and the premise is farfetched; and yet, the *Herald* chose to print this story, but to what effect? It is possible that such stories help to sell papers, but at this time, newspapers were being sold as fast as they could be printed. In fact, enterprising newsboys were able to double the price and pocket the difference. It would appear that the primary reason that any print media source would write and publish such an account would be rooted in instilling bias and prejudice through propaganda.

³¹ "Four Germans Go Back To Fight," *Lethbridge Herald*, August 7, 1914.

This was not a singular event; as in the weeks that followed, several similar articles appeared nationally, provincially, and locally, representing the idea that situated amongst the citizenry were fifth columnists who either intended to find their way back to the Fatherland, with the intention of taking up arms against the Empire or were plotting to sabotage the war effort from inside the country. The *Herald* articles spoke to anonymous threats and named individuals suspected of being saboteurs, usually identifying them as being ‘Germans,’ ‘Austrians,’ or ‘Turks.’ In this regard, the *Herald* reaffirmed existing nativist beliefs and promoted prejudiced behaviours and attitudes within the community. They also began to ramp up a sense of paranoia, especially relating to perceived threats to the High Level Bridge.

The first such account appeared on 14 August 1914 and like the 7 August article, it is astonishing in its sensationalism and admitted lack of credibility. Beginning with the headline, “Was an Attempt Made to Blow Up The Big Bridge?”, the article then answered the question as follows:

A wild rumor spread about the streets this morning that an attempt had been made last night to blow up the high level bridge here, but the police deny any knowledge of it. The rumor was to the effect that two suspicious characters were arrested and that explosives were found on them. The bridge here is looked upon as a very important strategical position in the hands of the enemy, as it is on the shortest route from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The CPR special service department will give no confirmation as to the yarn. A strict guard is being kept day and night.³²

This report, coupled with early warnings from officials in Ottawa regarding potential infrastructure sabotage, lead to a preoccupation with the protection of the bridge that lasted throughout the war, but was most prominent from 1914-1915. Members of the former 25th Battery were the first to take up the post in support of the Canadian Pacific

³² “Was an Attempt Made to Blow Up The Big Bridge?,” *Lethbridge Herald*, August 14, 1914.

Railway and North West Mounted Police and they were later joined by recruits from the various artillery batteries. In 1915, the Lethbridge Home Guard, which had been established by City Police Chief John Skelton, took over the responsibilities for the duration of the war.³³ Despite the increased security, it was the perceived threat to the bridge that led to one of the most notorious demonstrations of prejudice and paranoia in Lethbridge's history.

It all began on 17 August 1914, just three days after the first false alarm relating to an attack on the bridge. Chinook Collieries reported to the North West Mounted Police that thirty-one kegs of black powder had gone missing. Within hours, police began searching the river bottom area for the missing explosives. They discovered that twenty-three kegs of powder had been stored away in an abandoned shack located very near to the bridge. As security forces from the railway, military, and the mounted police converged on the shack, they spotted a man wading in chest deep water across the river towards the shack. The man emerged from the water and approached the shack, whereupon he was promptly arrested and taken to barracks. When he was searched, the suspect was found to have in his possession a small crow bar. Police identified the suspect as Herman Weirmeir, a German-Canadian who lived in the city with his wife and family.³⁴

Once it was realized that the individual in question was a German-Canadian, everything seemed to fall into place. The whole idea that a German saboteur might target the bridge was validated and an article published in the *Herald* the next day said it all, with a rather lengthy headline that read "23 Kegs of Powder Found – Suspect, Herman

³³ Kilford, 28-29.

³⁴ "Explosives Found – H. Weirmeir Arrested," *Lethbridge Herald*, August 17, 1914.

Weirmeir, Canadian German Arrested – Had Burglar’s Kit When Taken – Remanded Eight Days – Police Say Evidence is Strong Enough to Have Him Shot.” The first paragraph of the article is a chilling description of the fear, suspicion, and mistrust felt in the community during the early days of the war:

If military law prevailed in Lethbridge at the present time, it is the opinion of the police and military authorities that there would have been a casualty to report this morning. Just at dusk last night, a man giving the name of Herman Weirmeir, was arrested near the big bridge, and he is suspected of being connected with what looks like a concerted attempt to blow the trestle into smithereens. So strong is the evidence against him, in fact, that if military law prevailed, it is likely that he would have been backed up against a brick wall and shot.³⁵

Fortunately for Weirmeir, cooler heads prevailed and within a few days, he had the opportunity to tell his side of the story in court. In an article published a week later, the *Herald* quoted Inspector Lindsay of the North West Mounted Police as stating that “from the developments that have transpired, he is practically cleared from any blame that might have been attached to him in connection with the theft of powder from the Chinook Collieries, or the supposed contemplation of the attempt on the bridge.” It turned out that Weirmeir was going to the shack with his tools in an attempt to salvage some window casings and in light of this, his behaviour was deemed to be perfectly normal, as he had no way of knowing that someone had stashed the stolen blasting powder inside.³⁶

The reporting of the *Herald* regarding the Weirmeir arrest could be considered to be both sensationalist and irresponsible. Such rhetoric, with both implicit and explicit avocation of violence, moves beyond the purveyance of propaganda and the idea that an innocent man could have been summarily executed is not that farfetched. In his work,

³⁵ “23 Kegs of Powder Found – Suspect, Herman Weirmeir, Canadian German Arrested – Had Burglar’s Kit When Taken – Remanded Eight Days – Police Say Evidence is Strong Enough to Have Him Shot,” *Lethbridge Herald*, August 18, 1914.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Keshen speaks to similar situations in other parts of Canada, noting that “up to 16,000 militia personnel maintained patrols along the international border, as well as at arsenals, railways stations, docks, canal locks, grain elevators and other facilities considered militarily or economically essential. From this charged atmosphere there sometimes flowed unfortunate results.”³⁷ Keshen provides an example of two American hunters who were killed by militia personnel near Niagara Falls, having been mistaken for advance scouts for a German invasion.³⁸ Considering this and other like stories, it is not unreasonable to make the assumption that not only could things have ended very differently for Herman Weirmeir, but that the Lethbridge *Herald* would have borne some moral, if not legal responsibility due to the tone and content of their reporting.

Lethbridge was transformed from a small, but influential regional economic hub driven by growth and progress, who self-identified with cheerfully optimistic slogans such as ‘The Sunshine City,’ ‘The Land of the Big Sky,’ and ‘The Irrigation Capital of Canada,’ to a community that appeared preoccupied with a faraway war that was barely underway and of its causation they knew little. It is understandable that the citizenry could get caught up in the enthusiasm of events that were steeped in pride and patriotism, but those rooted in prejudice and paranoia are more troublesome. Perhaps the growing nativist sentiments in Alberta in the period preceding the war, coupled with fiery speeches and cautionary messages delivered by public and military officials, explain the public’s demonstrations of prejudice and paranoia. However, questions still remain - where were the dissenters and why is there no record of their dissent?

³⁷ Keshen, 7.

³⁸ Ibid.

Those who held positions within the local social, political, and economic elite spoke freely in reminding Lethbridgians that as good citizens of the empire, they had much to contribute. Yet, there was no call for calm in the face of spreading rumours and threats being made to citizens of German, Austrian, and Hungarian descent or those bearing any surname that might sound vaguely 'Teutonic.' Most notable among those who kept their silence was William Buchanan. The newspaperman and Member of Parliament chose not to wield the power of the editorial column to quell the fires of prejudice and paranoia, which had in large part been ignited and fanned by his fellow public officials and his own newspaper.

There is scant information in the historical record that documents the perspective of those on the receiving end of prejudice and paranoia. If they spoke up at the time, it was likely not done publically as they would have quickly learned the potential consequences. It is possible that large portions of the affected immigrant community chose to remain silent and do nothing to attract attention to themselves or their families. In speaking to the experience of Ukrainian-Canadians, both in terms of being interred as 'enemy aliens' and losing the right to vote, Lubomyr Luciuk notes that most individuals received the news 'meekly.'³⁹ In terms of the Southwestern Alberta experience of targeted immigrant groups, it seems that Luciuk's assessment would also apply. Although a few did try to evade persecution by crossing into the United States, most remained where they had settled and many paid the price for this choice.

What set Lethbridge apart, in terms of this aspect of the First World War experience, lies in the infrastructure already in place in the community. Early detainees

³⁹ Lubomyr Y. Luciuk, *Without Just Cause: Canada's First National Internment Operations and the Ukrainian Canadians, 1914-1920* (Kingston: Ukrainian Civil Liberties Association, 2006), 1-2.

were held in the North West Mounted Police barracks, with some of the more ‘dangerous’ detainees being held in the Lethbridge Gaol. By September 1914, news arrived to the effect that the city was about to receive another distinction, having been chosen to be home to the first internment camp in Alberta. On 11 September 1914, the following announcement appeared in the Lethbridge *Herald*:

Chicken of a decidedly different type than the winged variety will make Lethbridge their home in future, if the plans of Colonels Wetherby and Cruikshanks pan out. The poultry building at the fairgrounds is to be converted into a military prison, according to the announcement made by Manager McNicol this morning...The authorities have been puzzled for some time as to where they could confine the prisoners of war captured in the province. The penal institutions are practically full...the Lethbridge fairgrounds meet with the approval of the officers...The establishment of the military prison here will mean much to Lethbridge. The city donated the building to the Crown, but fortunately for the merchants of the city, the Huns and Hungarians will have to be fed. All the supplies will be purchased locally, and there will be an additional staff of several guards to clothe and feed.⁴⁰

Within this announcement is an underlying message to the citizenry. In addition to the perceived honour of being chosen as the site of the first internment camp in Alberta and the potential economic benefits to the community, the underlying message to certain immigrants or dissenters is ‘If you live in Southwestern Alberta and draw attention to yourselves, there is the potential for internment.’

In her book, *Prairie Prisoners: POWs in Lethbridge during two world conflicts*, Georgia Fooks documented the opening day of the camp as follows:

Twenty-eight prisoners arrived that same morning of Sept. 30. They were transferred from the Royal North West Mounted Police barracks. These men were part of 70 prisoners already being held by the RNWMP. Many with German-sounding names, Teutonic accents, some having been born in eastern Europe, others expressing sympathy for German causes or uttering anti-British comments had been picked up as aliens and jailed. A comment from a person suspected as an alien: ‘I don’t care who

⁴⁰ “Only Military Prison in Alberta To be Established at Lethbridge Fair Grounds. War Prisoners To Be Confined in Poultry Building Till War Ends. City Donates Building Free,” *Lethbridge Herald*, September 11, 1914.

wins or loses. It won't make me king,' was enough to get attention.⁴¹

The establishment of the internment camp provided the Lethbridge *Herald* with more material from which they could print articles, very much in the style of the popular Victorian 'penny dreadful.' Topped with sensational headlines like "Detained Germans Escape, Caught at Magrath After an Exciting Chase," "Turks Tried to Skip, Arrested," and "Rapp Goes to War Prison; Pal is Freed," most articles focused on daring escapes, captures, and nefarious activities of the detainees. At its peak in 1915, the camp held approximately 300 prisoners and employed sixty guards.⁴² Citizens were warned to remain vigilant and to report any 'suspicious behaviour' – and report they did.

Accusations abounded ranging from the possession of banned books to the sabotage of threshing machines. In an attempt to escape the atmosphere of suspicion, many potential 'enemy aliens' tried to make their way to the American border, as at this time the United States was not involved in the conflict. If caught, 'enemy aliens' were promptly arrested and returned to Lethbridge for detention. They were also cut off from their families in Europe, as they could not send or receive any mail to or from home. Some would try to get the mail through to Montana, but once again, if they were discovered the consequences would be severe.

This situation is exemplified by the account of the arrest and internment of Pastor William Stuhlmann, a recent immigrant, who came to Allerston, Alberta (thirty kilometres north-east of the Coutts border crossing) in 1912. Pastor Stuhlmann served as a priest for a rural, predominantly German population and was accused of helping the

⁴¹ Georgia Green Fooks, *Prairie Prisoners: POWs in Lethbridge during two world conflicts* (Lethbridge: Lethbridge Historical Society, 2002), 19.

⁴² *Ibid*, 20.

community send and receive letters and newspapers from Germany via the post office at Sweet Grass, Montana. Constable Lobb of the North West Mounted Police indicated that the community was comprised of approximately one hundred citizens of German descent, who spoke German exclusively, and seemed to have a strong allegiance to their homeland. The constable indicated that his sources had reported that Stuhlmann would spend time with local families discussing politics and reiterating the message that Germany can and must win the war. With no more proof than these statements, Stuhlmann was branded an enemy of Canada and detained in Lethbridge.⁴³ Like the 8,579 men, women, and children detained across Canada during the First World War, Pastor Stuhlmann was a potential enemy, according to the policies of the government and this sentiment was confirmed in the hearts and minds of much of the citizenry.⁴⁴

Ironically, it was the escape attempts and accusations of passing illegal materials and mail through the border that lead to the closure of the Lethbridge Detention Camp in November 1916. Lethbridge was deemed to be too close to the border to make it an efficient and secure site for the long term housing of detainees. Most of those housed at the camp were sent to more remote camps in Alberta, primarily either the Banff or Castle Mountain facilities.⁴⁵

In terms of the effect that this episode in Lethbridge history had on imagined community, it is not really possible to understand through the lens of twenty-first century sensibilities. While there were certainly some positive aspects to the increased sense of pride and patriotism, the incidents relating to prejudice and paranoia represent a black

⁴³ Kilford, 28-30.

⁴⁴ Luchiuk, 2.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 4.

mark in the history of the community. In his book, *Behind Canadian Barbed Wire*, David Carter attempts to address this difficult issue as follows:

In the light of war induced hysteria many of us have a tendency to say ‘If the government believes there’s a problem and action must be taken, then let the action be taken.’ If the result of that statement is that eight thousand five hundred persons are taken away and deposited behind barbed wire – that means little to me, if in 1915 I happened to be a white Anglo-Saxon Canadian whose roots go down deep in Ontario or back to the ‘Mother Country of England.’ If the British Empire was threatened then we should intern these people with strange sounding names who had come to Canada and especially western Canada during the last couple of decades.⁴⁶

There is little doubt as to the effects of pride, prejudice, and propaganda on the transformation of imagined community in Lethbridge and area during the early weeks of the First World War. The sentiments and situations that were present during this time were maintained, in some respect, throughout the war, but were manifested differently as time went on. It would have been impossible to contain the frenzied activities of the early weeks and although the pace slowed, there is no indication that the overall community commitment substantially wavered. As the extensive Lethbridge *Herald* coverage began to include enlistment information and the inevitable casualty lists, the area’s First World War experience became more focused upon the units raised to represent the city on the front and the individuals who comprised them. The next two chapters of this thesis speak to how these individuals both reflected and shaped Lethbridge’s wartime imagined community.

⁴⁶ David J. Carter, *Behind Canadian Barbed Wire* (Calgary: Tumbleweed Press Limited, 1980), 52.

Chapter 4 – Great War Imaginings: A Place for Everyone

While the events of August 1914 provided Lethbridgians with ample opportunity to feel connected to the war effort, more direct participation was necessary to sustain support in the city and like communities across Canada in the months and years to follow. It was general public sentiment and that of many officials that the war would be brief, likely over by Christmas, and as such, only select individuals would have the opportunity to get to the front. Desmond Morton speaks to these early notions that the war would be remote, romantic, and short lived, noting that; “In August 1914, few thought Canadians would see much action: military and civilian experts almost unanimously agreed that modern wars would last no more than a few months. Without a quick victory, the thinking went, complex economies would collapse and nations would be compelled to make peace.”¹ It is apparent that consideration was not given to the changes in modern warfare brought about by rapid industrialization and the possibility that the war would be conducted in a stationary ‘trench setting,’ as opposed to the wide-open cavalry battles which Canadians were familiar with from their Boer War and North West Rebellion experiences. The people of Southwestern Alberta would have been particularly susceptible to this misconception as they had long embraced the ‘frontier’ ideal of soldiering, which had won them much acclaim in the past as rugged horsemen and sharpshooters.

When recruiting offices opened in Lethbridge on 9 August 1914, Major Stewart found the response to be overwhelming. In addition to most of the members of the militia battery he commanded, he received responses from local men, young and old, all caught

¹ Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1993), 3.

up in the patriotic fervour and anxious to enlist. Although the number of men requested by Ottawa was very small initially, care had to be taken to choose the ‘right’ candidates without disappointing those who would remain at home, but whose support was important to the local war effort. The solution was to place the 25th Battery members first, adding only a few others to the first contingent who had relevant military experience with other units. Within days, a list approved by Major Stewart was submitted to Ottawa and the final selection of twenty-five men was made known. These men were to join the First Contingent. With such a heavy response to recruiting, the original twenty-five were touted to be among the very best and reflective of the newly welded official identity and imagined wartime community.

Although the number is small in terms of conducting a thorough demographic analysis, some conclusions can be drawn from a review of specific markers relating to this group as contextualized with the analyses of the First Canadian Contingent’s demographics as compiled by Morton and Tim Cook respectively. It is particularly useful to examine the place of birth of these recruits. Using the figures provided in Cook’s *At the Sharp End*, the ranks of the First Canadian Contingent was comprised as follows: 62.5% were born in Britain, 29.9% in Canada, and 2.5% in the United States.²

Comparatively, the Lethbridge contribution to the First Contingent breaks down as follows: 54.2% were born in Britain, 12.5% in Canada, and 20.8% in the United States.

It is possible that the variation in numbers, particularly as it relates to the American- and Canadian-born can be explained by the settlement history of the area and by the fact that the city was a relatively new community. The number of Canadian-born

² Cook, *At the Sharp End*, 28-29.

being less than half of the overall national statistics can be explained in this way: The area had been settled only five decades previously and for much of the community's early years, it was a predominantly bachelor community. Much of the settlement occurred during the immigration boom of the early twentieth-century and as such, many of the Canadian-born would have been migrants from Central and Eastern Canada and most of the western-born would not have been old enough to participate.

The more striking contrast is evident in the individuals of American birth. The number of American-born local recruits is almost ten times higher than that of the national average. This does confirm this thesis' earlier contention that American influence was particularly strong in Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta. As noted in the first chapter of this thesis, there was a definite dual British and American influence to the imagined community of this region, which became decidedly more British during the Boer War. It would appear that at least in terms of military participation, some American-born individuals had chosen to remain in the community and had embraced this pro-British official identity to some degree.

While these statistics are useful in demonstrating the unique character of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta, the First Contingent was a very small portion of the local men who would eventually serve in the First World War. During the early months of the war, the challenge was not in finding enough willing men, but rather in finding a place for everyone. Much has been written regarding what would motivate such a large number of Canadians to want to enlist. For his part, Benedict Anderson asserts that the power of imagined wartime community provided the best explanation as to why "The great wars of this century are extraordinary not so much in the unprecedented scale

on which they permitted people to kill, as in the colossal numbers persuaded to lay down their lives.”³

While it can be argued that the early recruits were predominantly comprised of individuals who embraced the official identity and the military ethos as instilled by six years of militia presence, Morton notes that it was not that simple. In recounting the experiences of J.M. Macdonell, a twenty-nine year old Rhodes Scholar who left his position as president of the National Trust to become an artillery officer, Morton suggests that some individuals who had previously been members of the militia did not want to fight, but had to enlist in order to save face. It would not do much for one’s reputation having been a ‘peacetime soldier,’ to then step aside when faced with the real thing.⁴ In short, it cannot be assumed that previous militia service meant that an individual was eager to go to war. In a community as small as Lethbridge, the pressure on militiamen to enlist would have been considerable. Cook speaks to the myriad of other personal motivations for enlisting, both in the early days and later in the war, which included economic considerations, patriotism, peer pressure, a desire for travel and adventure, and as an opportunity to improve one’s social standing. He further speaks to the diversity of motivation, noting that, “No single reason for Canadians’ decision to enlist stands out; what appealed to one man might have no effect on another, but all had a range of allegiances that often intersected and overlapped.”⁵

Perhaps one of the most interesting motivating factors is that relating to the concept of social standing. This had been evident in Lethbridge during the militia years

³ Anderson, 144.

⁴ Morton, 51.

⁵ Cook, *At the Sharp End*, 26.

as those who held positions of authority within the 25th Battery were generally members of the social, economic, and political elite, and so for the other ranks, participation in the summer training camps granted access to individuals of a higher standing within the community. This carried forth into the First World War as well, particularly the First Contingent and the Lethbridge-based artillery batteries recruited later – all of whom were commanded by prominent community members. For the men who were counted among Lethbridge’s elite, the desire to serve was also very strong. As Morton notes, “War was deemed the proper vocation for a gentleman: his courage could be assumed as an attribute of his class, and warlike skills were part of his upbringing.”⁶

During the early recruiting and enlistment period in Lethbridge, there appeared to be a surplus of gentlemen who were anxious to demonstrate their patriotism, martial skill, leadership ability, and perhaps attain a commission that they could parlay into future prestige and success. The First Contingent left Lethbridge under the command of Lieutenant Charles Godwin, nephew of Charles A. Magrath. Among those prominent community members left behind was Bruce Conybeare, son of lawyer C.F.P. Conybeare, one of the original community founders. His name was placed on the initial list sent to Ottawa, but he was not chosen to be a part of the first draft. He left Lethbridge with a second group later in the month comprised of like individuals bound for Valcartier in an effort to find a place with the First Canadian Contingent. Conybeare was successful and was taken on strength in Valcartier, later serving as a lieutenant in the 73rd Battalion CEF. Every early founding member of the community identified previously in this thesis had

⁶ Morton, 96.

close relations who volunteered for service in the First World War.⁷ Most were or became commissioned officers, however, there were some exceptions. Young men anxious to get to the front often preferred to do so as an enlisted man, rather than wait at home or in Britain for an officer's position to open up on the front. For example, Mayor Hardie's two sons both served as enlisted men. William Jr. enlisted with the 47th Battalion CEF, while Jesse joined up with the 56th Battalion CEF.

While one might assume that the members of the social, economic, and political elite may have wanted to use their influence to shelter their children from the dangers of war, the situation was quite the opposite across the nation. Many prominent Canadians and their sons served on the frontlines and particularly as infantry officers, they would have been at the forefront of the action. While the perception is that the average Canadian recruit was viewed as 'cannon fodder,' particularly in what Cook terms as the "poor bloody infantry," the casualty and mortality rates were similarly high for frontline officers.

After the First Contingent, British reservists, and Second Contingent had left Lethbridge in August 1914, the interest in enlistment did not wane. Major Stewart was inundated with letters and telegrams from individuals across Canada and the United States, as well as long lineups outside of the local recruiting office. Community groups, led by the Sir Alexander Galt Chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the

⁷ In addition to the above mentioned names, the following men and women also enlisted for overseas service. Their ties to members of the city's social, economic, and political elite and noted in parentheses: Charles Bolton Magrath (son of Charles A. Magrath), John Lockhart Godwin (nephew of Charles A. Magrath), Harold Torrance Higinbotham (son of J.D. Higinbotham), Frank Hastings Hamilton Mewburn (son of Dr. F.H. Mewburn), William Smith Henderson (son of William Henderson), Harold Thompson Henderson (son of William Henderson), Sidney Cecil Robson (son-in-law of Harry Bentley), Roy Buchanan (brother of William Buchanan), Donald McKillop (son of Reverend Charles McKillop) and Ethel Conybeare (daughter of C.F.P. Conybeare).

Empire, were already busy with a variety of projects dedicated to supporting the local recruits who had left just days or weeks before. By Christmas 1914, the First Contingent had arrived in England and so too did their first care package from the people of Lethbridge. On 23 January 1915, the Lethbridge *Herald* published a letter of thanks from Lieutenant Godwin, the first of many such letters that would appear during the war years. The letter read in part:

I saw a parcel placed being placed in my tent. I had a suspicion what it was. That afternoon, I announced on stable parade to the boys that I had a small parcel from Lethbridge for them, and when I got down to my tent they were lined up as if ready to buy tickets for a hockey match. To every fourth man I gave a pack of cards. Some of them are on pass, I shall have to give the remainder out when they return. They asked me to thank you all for remembering them as best I could. It was more than thoughtful of you to say the least. I am sure you don't know what a dry pair of socks mean to a lot of men who have been tramping around in mud and rain, not all day, but every day.⁸

Although the First Contingent had not yet seen action, this letter did much to reinforce the bonds of imagined wartime community at home. The description of the men anxiously lining up indicated that they were excited to receive the parcel and by comparing the scene to a pleasantly familiar memory of home, such as a hockey game, Godwin evoked the bonds of shared experience that was uniquely Canadian. In mentioning the challenges of the muddy, wet Salisbury Plain, Godwin reassured the people at home that the dry socks they supplied were not just appreciated, but essential to the men's health and comfort.

Throughout the war years, active participation within the community would centre upon two predominant streams – enlistment for service and supporting those who already had left and the families they left behind. This ensured ample opportunity for everyone to find a place in the war effort, but in terms of the greater imagined wartime community,

⁸ "A Letter of Thanks," *Lethbridge Herald*, January 23, 1915.

Lethbridge would seek the opportunity to take participation a step further by raising entire ‘battle ready’ units that could represent the city on the frontlines of France and Belgium.

While Lethbridge had become a social and economic hub for Southwestern Alberta, it quickly became a recruiting hub as well. It was not enough for the community to do their part in this and other aspects of the war effort. They were encouraged to set record numbers and in doing so, prove that they were as good as or better than similar sized communities across the nation. The Lethbridge *Herald* played a major role in furthering the competitive aspect of recruiting and enlistment, just as they had been boosters of growth and development in the decade previous. Throughout the war, every issue of the *Herald* carried articles or advertisements which acknowledged the community’s part in the greater war effort and encouraged the citizenry to do more. Although these articles, like soldiers’ letters during this time, could be prone to exaggeration. A review of the tone and content of this material explains a great deal about how the community perceived their place in the greater wartime imagined community.

In addition to the specific Lethbridge-based units, individuals from Southwestern Alberta served in every branch of the Canadian Expeditionary Force and in some circumstances, local citizens also joined the British, American, and Australian forces. During the first year or so, it was the Alberta-based units who swept through the province in massive recruiting drives. As a result of this, local men served on the frontlines with Edmonton’s 49th Battalion, Calgary’s 10th and 50th battalions, and the province-wide 31st Battalion. They also joined a myriad of reinforcement battalions and this recruiting effort is well documented in a series of articles relating to the 82nd Battalion out of Calgary. On

29 September 1915, an article titled “Recruiting Officers Out for Record in Lethbridge” appeared in the *Herald*. This article read in part as follows:

If you happen to be young, healthy looking and a man, in other words a likely-looking recruit for His Majesty’s overseas forces, and you happen to be loitering anywhere on Fifth street this week, you will not escape the eagle glances of the recruiting officers or the recruiting sergeant of the 82nd Battalion, who are here from Calgary to make a record in enlistment for the new unit.

Forty-two fine, soldierly appearing young men of Lethbridge, unattached and willing to fight, have already fallen for the wiles of these recruiting officers..

The recruiting sergeant drifts along Fifth street and tackles the likely ones. He casually drops into a group on the corner, and before they know it he is telling them of their duty to their country, and his appeal very rarely fails.

The recruiting office in the Balmoral block is already the keystone that draws the crowds on Fifth. There is a business-like air about the officers in their campaign that attracts one. The posters in the windows appeal to you. You line up at the counter to hear the chatter and the recruiting officer, sweeping the circle with a piercing glance calls out, “Now then, who’s the next to be measured,” and before you know it, the doctor has the tape around your chest and is listening to your heart beats. Then you ‘sign on’ and step out into the street again with a feeling of solid satisfaction and at peace with everybody but the Kaiser.⁹

During the course of the week, articles appeared in the *Herald*, which reported the recruiting totals complete with a list of names and ethnic origins of the latest enlistees. In just one year, recruiting offices had moved from long lines of potential enlistees to the use of subtle and not-so-subtle shaming tactics. As Morton states, the original recruiting requirement was that men should be “eighteen to forty-five. Unmarried men would be given preference over married men, particularly those with children.”¹⁰ By the time the 82nd Battalion set up shop, these requirements had been relaxed, as evidenced by the enlistment and service of Private Timothy Kelly. On 30 September 1915, Kelly enlisted with the 82nd Battalion. He was forty-seven years old, married, and the father of six

⁹ “Recruiting Officers Out for Record in Lethbridge,” *Lethbridge Herald*, September 29, 1915.

¹⁰ Morton, 9.

young children. It is not likely that Kelly was motivated to join by a youthful spirit of adventure or even by peer pressure, nor would he have been a prime target for the battalion's aggressive recruiting tactics. Perhaps patriotism may have played a part, but it is far more likely that Kelly, who had worked in construction, was feeling the stress of a poor economy and that the soldier's pay, coupled with separation allowance and life insurance coverage, played a significant role in his decision to enlist. On 30 September 1916, one year to the day of his enlistment, Private Kelly died of wounds received while serving with Alberta's 31st Battalion.¹¹

While the enlistment of an individual like Timothy Kelly, who did not meet a single recruiting standard, was not common at this time, it was not unusual either. As Morton notes, during the course of the war, the age range for recruits, including both officers and other ranks, in the Canadian Expeditionary Force was astonishingly vast. The youngest recruit taken on strength was ten years old, while the oldest was eighty.¹² While these statistics appear rather extreme, it was not uncommon for underage and overage men to find their way into the ranks. A search of local records indicates that the youngest known local recruit was fifteen year old William Jenkinson who signed up with the 113th Battalion Lethbridge Highlanders, with the oldest known being fifty-eight year old Dr. Frank Mewburn, who enlisted with the Canadian Army Medical Corps.¹³

While statistics regarding age range are historically interesting, they were not the focus of community interest at the time. For the citizens of Lethbridge and area, it was

¹¹ Information regarding Private Timothy Kelly and his family was sourced from his fond at the Galt Museum & Archives.

¹² Morton notes that these were the only verifiable accounts of the oldest and youngest recruits in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. There are other anecdotal accounts of both younger and older enlistees.

¹³ As with Morton, these were the only men whose ages I could verify. It is possible that there were both older and younger recruits from Lethbridge and area.

the young men, really only boys in their minds, who appeared to best represent the spirit of imagined wartime community. Central among these young enlistees were those who were Lethbridge born and/or educated in the city's schools. There are many examples of special mention being made of both groups in newspaper articles throughout the war. By November 1915, a concentrated effort was undertaken by the *Herald* to compile a list of Lethbridge born individuals who had 'donned the khaki.' An article entitled, "Lethbridge Born Boys in the Ranks" urged citizens to submit names of Lethbridge born recruits to the newspaper, which read in part: "Who are the Lethbridge born boys now in khaki, preparing for, or actually engaged in active service? It is likely the list is far greater than people imagine. Many natives of the city have enlisted in other sections of the country."¹⁴

The article concludes with a preliminary list of names, complete with information regarding their familial ties in the community. A few months later, on 26 February 1916, an article titled "High School Has Big Honor Roll," which enumerated a list of forty Lethbridge High School graduates who were currently serving in the ranks.¹⁵ There is substantial overlap between the two lists, with many of the prominent families being represented, which is not surprising as at that time, graduation from high school was uncommon, especially among recent immigrants, First Nations, and other non-conforming identity groups. With consideration of prevailing nativist sentiments, it is not surprising that Lethbridge born and educated individuals would be singled out as prime representatives of both the imposed official identity and the imagined wartime community.

¹⁴ "Lethbridge Born Boys in the Ranks," *Lethbridge Herald*, November 22, 1915.

¹⁵ "High School Has Big Honor Roll," *Lethbridge Herald*, February 26, 1916.

Another important facet of the local recruiting effort involved the enlistment of American born men. Some of these American recruits had been living in the area for several years, while others arrived at local recruiting stations, having made the trip from various points in the western United States. Among these were the nephews of Major General Sir Sam Steele, the Boer War veteran and former leader of the North West Mounted Police, who had been instrumental in bringing the militia to Lethbridge. A 22 February 1916 article in the *Herald* detailed the arrival of the Steele brothers at the Cardston recruiting office, having travelled from their home in Browning, Montana to enlist with the 113th Battalion Lethbridge Highlanders.¹⁶ While this report centred on the connection between the Steeles and Southwestern Alberta, it was one of many similar accounts documenting the arrival of Americans at local recruiting stations.

An earlier article relates the story of two Americans of British-descent who had gone to great lengths to secure a spot in the fighting ranks. It noted that the story of these men showed that “distance and lack of finance were no barriers to Britishers eager to serve their country. They had come all the way from Colorado and had walked the distance between Shelby Junction in Montana and Lethbridge, because they lacked the funds to buy a ticket. One of the men had paid \$120.00 to secure his release from the American cavalry. Both had existed on a meal a day during their trip from Colorado.”¹⁷ Evident in this and similar accounts was the ever present underlying message to local men who had not yet enlisted. If these Americans would go to such great lengths to do their part, how could any patriotic Canadian not do the same? In the years prior to the United States’ 1917 entry into the war, interest from individuals south of the border to enlist

¹⁶ “Steele’s Nephews Enlist With Kilties,” *Lethbridge Herald*, February 22, 1916.

¹⁷ “Local Man Aids Ones Eager to Join Ranks,” *Lethbridge Herald*, August 12, 1915.

brought about the formation of specific units like the 97th and 211th American Legion battalions.¹⁸ As Morton notes these battalions actively encouraged men to cross the border to join up with the Canadian Expeditionary Force and, “This offence against American law angered Washington and exasperated the British, who were doing their utmost to cultivate official American support.”¹⁹

The American Legion battalion was one of many special ‘community battalions’ authorized in 1915-16. Morton notes that these groups often incorporated recruiting themes or gimmicks meant to attract certain types of people, for example bantams, frontiersmen, ‘Cowboys and Indians,’ Acadians, sportsmen, and others.²⁰ Several of these specialty battalions recruited in Lethbridge and area, with the American Legion being quite prominent. Articles appeared listing the names and hometowns of Americans who made the trip to Lethbridge to enlist, as did advertisements targeting these specialty groups. An example of this can be found in the 13 July 1916 issue of the *Lethbridge Herald*, which includes an American Legion battalion advertisement alongside one for the 223rd Battalion Vikings of Canada. Southwestern Alberta did have a significant Scandinavian population, which was targeted by the battalion with the following message: “The Viking recruiting officers, like the famous adventurers from whom they take their name, are daring rovers of the seas of eligible youth for enlistments.”²¹ It is doubtful that the potential recruits of Scandinavian heritage had much experience on the high seas, but the image is nonetheless powerful in that it evoked the feelings and emotions of imagined community in those of Scandinavian heritage.

¹⁸ Morton, 58.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, 56-58.

²¹ “The Vikings,” *Lethbridge Herald*, July 13, 1916.

Most prominent among the specialty battalions of 1915-16 in Southwestern Alberta was the 113th Battalion Lethbridge Highlanders. They were raised with the hope that an entire infantry battalion made up of local men could represent the community on the battlefields of the Western Front. Secondly, they were touted as Alberta's first Highland battalion, which carried with it a sense of prestige and imagery of warriors dressed in kilts and other Scottish regalia. In examining the formation of the 113th Battalion and related demographic material, as compared with that of the city's four artillery batteries, much can be learned about local First World War participation and the impact of existing official identity and imagined community on the recruiting and enlistment process.

Before comparing the local units, it is important to consider the inherent and perceived differences between the artillery and infantry wartime experience in general. The organization of the Canadian Corps was such that it encompassed four active divisions, with each division being comprised of three brigades of infantry and one brigade of artillery. Each brigade of infantry included four battalions, while each brigade of artillery was composed of four batteries. The strength of each battery and battalion varied depending upon operational situations and casualties, but in general, a battalion was made up of roughly 1000 men, while a full strength battery rarely exceeded 150 men.²² Morton describes a battery or battalion as being "like a small town, full of remembered faces, shared experiences, and old friends and enemies."²³ The obvious size difference between the two would suggest that there would be a far greater opportunity

²² Tim Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1917-1918* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2008), 17.

²³ Morton, 77.

for members of a battery to establish and maintain relationships than their much larger battalion counterparts.

Morton also asserts that the artillery had become known as the elite branch of the Canadian military structure during the militia years and this likely carried forward into the First World War. According to Morton, their elite reputation was in part because the training schools at Halifax, Quebec, and Petawawa had higher standards than their infantry counterparts.²⁴ Artillery recruits were also held to a higher physical standard. For example, gunners were required to be at least sixty-seven inches tall, with a minimum chest measurement of thirty-four and a half inches.²⁵ By twenty-first century standards, these were not particularly big men, but at the time, they would have been substantially larger than many of their infantry counterparts. The primary reason for the higher physical standards lie in practicality, not prestige, as gunners were required to haul and load heavy artillery shells into armaments. The presumption was that larger men would be stronger and better suited to artillery tasks, but the perception was that they were ‘husky specimens of manhood,’ which reinforced to some degree their existing elite reputation.

During the course of the war, relationships between the artillery and infantry, even within the same division, were often strained. The infantry were the frontline soldiers and as such, sustained much higher casualty rates, while the artillery often operated several kilometres behind the trenches and therefore the risk was lowered. Although the job of an artilleryman might be considered ‘bomb proof’ from an infantry perspective, this was not the case. According to Cook, the gunners were vulnerable, especially in the early months

²⁴ Ibid, 101.

²⁵ Kilford, 30.

of the war when they operated much closer to the lines. Even when they retreated to indirect firing positions, they were targeted by both enemy artillery and aircraft.²⁶

Perhaps the greatest stressor in the relationship between the infantry and artillery was the sheer destruction wreaked by the ‘big guns.’ It was a ‘love-hate’ relationship of sorts, as the frontline troops were protected by well-placed artillery barrages and counterfire, but unfortunately, the indirect shelling was not always accurate and in many cases, the infantry were subjected to inadvertent friendly fire.

Cook speaks extensively to the savagery of artillery weaponry on both sides of the conflict: “It was the artillery that was the true killer. Doctors estimated that more than half of all wounds received during the war were caused by the artillery’s guns. The crash of high explosive shells, whirling shrapnel, and shell splinters proved early in the fighting that artillery would decide the fate of empires. For those caught in the open, shrapnel and high explosive shells wreaked havoc.”²⁷ It did not matter much to the ‘poor bloody infantry’ if the shells raining down were Canadian or German in origin. They suffered the same consequences regardless. In his assessment, Cook speaks to the attitudes of the men in the trenches with a simple quote from infantryman Frederic Manning: “There’s too much fucking artillery in this bloody war.”²⁸ It was the idea that artillerymen on both sides could cause so much destruction with very little perceived risk to themselves that lead them to acquire the unflattering sobriquet of ‘nine mile snipers.’

In examining the three Lethbridge-based active artillery batteries and the infantry battalion also raised in the city, it is important to consider the tenuous relationship

²⁶ Cook, *At the Sharp End*, 65,

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid, 256.

between the artillery and infantry in general. The community embraced both the artillery and infantry as honoured representatives of the city, affectionately referring to the artillerymen as ‘Battery Boys,’ and the infantrymen as ‘Kilties.’ These were not unique terms of endearment, as they were used in other communities and units, but this did not detract from the high regard in which the units were held by many in the community. The complicated artillery-infantry relationship developed later as a frontline issue and was not a concern in the local context until later in the war. In terms of this analysis, consideration will be given as to how the perception that the artillery was more prestigious or safer might affect the enlistment rates and demographic composition of the units. The three batteries will first be compared to one another and subsequently compared as a group to their infantry counterparts.

Within an eighteen month period, three battle-ready artillery batteries were raised within the city of Lethbridge. The first of these was the 20th Battery, who began recruiting on 23 November 1914, followed by the 39th Battery, who began recruiting on 11 October 1915, and the 61st Battery, who began recruiting on 4 March 1916. According to contemporaneous articles in the *Herald*, as well as the local military historiography, all three batteries were filled to capacity within a week.²⁹ A subsequent review of enlistment data pertaining to the blocks of regimental numbers assigned to each unit shows that this claim is false and in fact, each battery included individual recruits, whose regimental numbers fell within the allotted block, but whose enlistment dates were recorded as being months after it was claimed the units were full.³⁰

²⁹ These statements were made several times in both Lethbridge newspapers and have also been perpetuated in both of Kilford’s books on local military history.

³⁰ The author’s research came across dozens of examples of men being recruited to the various batteries well after the date that the *Herald* proclaimed them to be full.

In the case of the 20th Battery, this is not surprising as the original body of recruits was twice poached by existing groups. The first draft to leave the 20th was a group of thirty-two men hand selected by now Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart, who brought them along to his new posting as officer commanding the 7th Brigade Canadian Field Artillery.³¹ Just weeks later, Lieutenant McClelland took a draft of forty-one battery members to be re-assigned as reinforcements for existing units at the front.³² The 20th Battery demographic information is compiled from the June 1915 sailing list and does not include any of the individuals who left in earlier drafts. Demographic material from the 39th Battery is sourced from a February 1916 sailing list, while the information pertaining to the 61st Battery was compiled from a nominal roll published in the *Lethbridge Herald* in June 1916.

Beginning with the basic recruiting standards regarding age, marital status, height, and chest girth, it is apparent that for the most part, the standard was closely adhered to in the recruiting of all three batteries, with the most variation appearing in the age category. The average age for each battery was at or near twenty-seven years, however, each unit had some underage recruits, with only the 20th Battery reporting any overage members. A certain amount of inaccuracy can be assumed, as both recruiting officers and enlistees were notorious for providing inaccurate information, intentionally or otherwise. In terms of marital status, it would appear that the 20th Battery adhered more closely to the preference for single recruits, with 84 percent being reported as unmarried, whereas the 39th and 61st reported 67 and 69 percent respectively. This can be explained, in part, by

³¹ "Capt. Ripley Succeeds Lieut-Col. Stewart in Command of 20th," *Lethbridge Herald*, May 5, 1915.

³² "Battery Men Leave for Front," *Lethbridge Herald*, June 5, 1915.

the general shift in attitudes towards enlistment, where it later became more acceptable and less restrictive for married men to enlist.

In terms of physical markers, the minimum height for enlistment in the artillery was set at sixty-seven inches. With all three batteries having an average height of at or just over sixty-seven inches, it is apparent that a significant number of recruits did not meet the minimum height requirement. In reviewing the attestation documents for the recruits of all three units, this is certainly the case, with the shortest members of the 20th and 39th batteries being reported as sixty-three inches, while the 61st Battery had a recruit who measured sixty inches. Nearly all of the recruits from all three batteries met or exceeded the minimum chest girth requirement of thirty-four and a half inches. It is evident that the physical requirements were not strictly adhered to. This may have been justified by the fact that there were a wide range of positions within the battery and the taller, at least on paper, could have been assigned to gun positions, with those who did not meet the physical requirements being tasked with driving, care of the horses, cooking, and other auxiliary duties.

While the men of all three batteries appear to have met basic recruiting standards for the most part, an examination of birthplace and religious affiliation is necessary in developing an understanding of the social aspects of the recruiting process. An examination of these demographic markers indicates that enlistees of all three batteries were representative of community identities who conformed to the imposed official identity. By far the largest group of enlistees were British Isles-born, with this group making up 75 percent of the 20th Battery, 76 percent of the 39th, and 60 percent of the 61st. Canadian-born recruits comprised 23 percent of the 20th, 18 percent of the 39th, and rose to 37 percent of the 61st. The only other statistically significant group were the

American-borns, numbering 2 percent of the 20th, 5 percent of the 39th, and 6 percent of the 61st. The lack of diversity is not surprising as during this recruiting period, the city did not experience much difficulty in filling quotas in general. It would appear that enlistment in the local artillery batteries was a preferred option for the conforming identities within the community, who would have been among the most anxious to enlist and known to and preferred by the commanding officers of the respective batteries.

This lack of diversity is even more prominent in the declared religious affiliations of recruits.³³ 20th Battery members were reported as 97 percent Protestant and 3 percent Roman Catholic. The 39th Battery recruits were documented to be 99 percent Protestant and 1 percent Roman Catholic, while those of the 61st were declared to be 97 percent Protestant and 3 percent Roman Catholic. As with those of birthplace, these statistics can be explained by the fact that all three batteries were comprised nearly exclusively of those of conforming community identities. It was not until the city began the task of recruiting an entire infantry battalion that any sort of diversity was evidenced.

The 113th Battalion Lethbridge Highlanders began recruiting on 22 November 1915. Unlike their artillery counterparts, they never did reach full strength while in the city. Recruiting for this battalion was challenging because much larger numbers were needed to fill the unit and also because they were competing with the 39th and 61st batteries for local recruits. This, coupled with the fact that other Alberta units had heavily recruited in the area throughout the year, made filling the ranks a challenge and this

³³ It has been posited by many scholars that information regarding declared religion is unreliable, as recruiters were known to fill in "Anglican" when no religious preference was indicated. A survey of the Lethbridge recruiting practices notes that there were instances where local recruiters did indicate "No Religious Affiliation," and did not appear to use "Anglican" as a default response. Information regarding religious affiliation does not appear to be any more prone to misrepresentation than any other related demographic marker.

directly influenced the diversity of the group. Demographic material on this battalion was sourced from an October 1916 sailing list.

In terms of physical requirements, the 113th Battalion as an infantry battalion did not have the same size restrictions, but did follow the same parameters in terms of age and marital status. Although size restrictions were not as strictly imposed, the height average for recruits of the battalion was very similar to that of the batteries, measuring in at sixty-seven inches. The shortest recruit in the Kilties was documented to be fifty-nine inches tall. The average girth also exceeded the aforementioned criteria and was reported at about the same as that of the battery members. It was reported that 78 percent of the 113th recruits were single and the average age was twenty-six. These markers are also statistically similar to their battery counterparts.

The real measurable difference between the local infantry and artillery lies in the diversity of the more social aspects marked by birthplace and religious affiliation. In terms of birthplace, the battalion statistics are as follows: 52 percent British Isles-born, 24 percent Canadian-born, 10 percent American-born, and 14 percent born elsewhere. While the British born cohort remains the largest group, it is eighteen percent smaller than the average of the three batteries. The Canadian-born population is also smaller, but only by two percent, while the American-born group is larger by six percent. The most striking difference in the birthplace category lies in the number of recruits born outside of the three dominant groups. While there was little significant diversity within the artillery analysis, the infantry numbers indicate that 14 percent of the battalion was comprised of ethnicities other than British, Canadian, and American. Most prominent among these in order of representation were Norwegian, Montenegrin, Danish, Russian, Swedish, Australian, Serbian, French, Belgian, Finnish, Italian, and Swiss.

The battalion's ethnic diversity is accompanied by a corresponding increased diversity in terms of religious affiliation. While the Protestant population remains high at 84 percent, the percentage of Roman Catholics is almost five times higher than the average of the batteries. There is also a fairly large number of other or no religious affiliation at six percent, which is not apparent in the analysis of the batteries. Perhaps the best explanation for the increase in diversity within the ranks of the Lethbridge Highlanders is explained within the national context, as this unit was raised at a time when numerous like battalions were authorized across the nation in an effort to fill the ever increasing demand for reinforcements at the front.

With increased demand, recruits from other community identities that were not in line with the traditional imposed official identity were more likely to be accepted and encouraged. In terms of the local experience, this did not lessen the community's preoccupation with matters of ethnicity and the more 'diverse' recruits did not go unnoticed. A 9 December 1915 Lethbridge *Herald* article spoke to one such group as follows: "Five Montenegrins, former members of the Montenegrin army, will wear the kilts in the Lethbridge Highlanders. These men, husky specimens, splendid military types, came up from the States on last evening's train from Coutts and signed up as soon as they could satisfy the authorities that they were true blue Montenegrins. They make a good addition to the force. They are intensely eager to get into the firing line where they can get a shot at the Germans."³⁴

Each of the local units played a significant role in the imagined wartime community. In this case, the word 'imagined' is indeed appropriate, as the units, once

³⁴ "Montenegrins Sign on with Kiltie Battalion," *Lethbridge Herald*, December 9, 1915.

raised, did not spend a significant amount of time in the community. Of the artillery batteries, the 20th Battery was kept in the city for the longest period, a brief six months. It was also the only battery to have a direct connection to then Major Stewart, who upon receiving a promotion to lieutenant-colonel, left the city and never again commanded a local unit. The 39th and 61st batteries were housed for four and two months respectively. Although the time that the batteries spent in the city was relatively short, they did have a visible presence within the community and this is evidenced by the many *Herald* articles that appeared relating to battery activities. These included sporting events, where battery teams competed against each other and community groups in basketball, football, hockey, and bowling. They also took part in public parades and military exercises, from sham battles to ceremonial events. As each group left the city for further training, public send offs were held, but never rose to the exuberance of that of the First Contingent.

The experience of the infantry battalion was very similar, although they remained in Lethbridge the longest, about seven months. One of the main differences in the infantry experience was that the Highlanders boasted three bands and these groups played a very prominent role in nearly every significant public activity during that time. Another unique aspect of the Highlanders' experience was the planning of an event that never actually occurred. In the spring of 1916, much attention was given to a planned Highland games, which was set to include "tugs-of-war, putting the shot, and many other feats of strength and endurance in addition to the usual sprints and long distance races. One of the features of the day will be the old Highland sport of Tossing the Caber."³⁵ For whatever reason, this event did not happen and if this was a disappointment to the

³⁵ Brett Clifton, *A Battalion of Our Own: 113th Overseas Battalion CEF - The Lethbridge Highlanders* (Lethbridge: Lethbridge Historical Society, 2014), 20.

battalion members and the community, it was not the only one. The promised kilts also did not materialize, with government authorities citing expense as the primary reason.³⁶ However, it is more likely that kilts were not necessary as this group and others like it, were always intended to be broken up and used as reinforcements. While the three artillery batteries did have the opportunity to represent the city on the battlefields of France and Belgium, the Kilties were broken up immediately after arriving in Britain in October 1916. As consolation, the majority of the men were taken on strength by the existing Canadian-Scottish battalions and were able to serve alongside other members of the community.

The final question relating to the local artillery and infantry units lies in the matter of mortality rates. One of the primary considerations for joining the artillery was that it was considered to be much safer than serving in the infantry. This is borne out within an examination of local casualties. Of the 148 original members of the 20th Battery, twenty were killed during the forty-one months that they were overseas. The 39th Battery lost sixteen of their original 135 members during a period of thirty-two months service, while the 61st Battery had six deaths among their original 134 members in twenty-six months. Of the original 901 Kilties, 175 lost their lives during their twenty-six months of service. The percentage killed of Lethbridge Highlanders was 19 percent, while the percentage for the 61st Battery in a similar period of time was 3 percent. In this regard, it would seem that the local infantry-artillery experience is very similar to the national trends as described by Cook and would explain the rift that occurred between the two groups as the war progressed and the disparity in the casualty rates became more evident.

³⁶ Ibid, 17-18.

These casualty rates provide a partial explanation for the problems that occurred with recruiting during the latter stages of the war, but for communities like Lethbridge, over-recruiting was also an issue. The large bachelor population had initially provided a fertile ground for recruiting and enlistment. By the spring of 1916, the number of men leaving the city for overseas service was causing a severe shortage of labour within the community. According to Christopher Kilford, "In April 1916, the Lethbridge Board of Trade had circulated a memorandum noting that if recruiting continued, there would be a serious shortage of labour. All the remaining men were needed at home. In particular, the harvest had to be gathered and the coal mines were now undermanned."³⁷ Perhaps the most graphic demonstration of the recruiting difficulties in the area at this time was a June 1916 "Call to Arms," which was issued by Lieutenant-Colonel W.C. Bryan, who was raising the 191st Battalion Bryan's Buffaloes out of Fort Macleod. Dealing with an unenthusiastic response to traditional recruiting tactics, Bryan published the following statement in the *Herald*:

To the young man of the city of Lethbridge, who for one reason or another has held back from enlistment for the past two years, to the young man, who, fit and able, should now be doing his duty in khaki at the front, to the man who can be spared by his family and who is needed to fill a gap in the firing line, I send out this call to arms. It's a strong call; It's a long call; It's an incessant call; It's a loud call; It's the call of right; the call of justice; the call of honour; the call of liberty; the call of outraged women and children; the call of your brothers and relatives in the blood soaked trenches of Flanders; the democratic call of freedom of speech and thought and action against the military autocracy and rigid dominance of might over right of our enemies. The call to uphold all we hold dear in civilization. No man is now so important that he cannot be spared from his business yet each man today is so important that he is required in the firing line. Do you believe in honour, in justice, in right, in all that our glorious flag and tradition stand for? Then, I say, come forward and do your duty. Do all that is great, good and holy, come forward and don the uniform of our King and Cause and Country.³⁸

³⁷ Kilford, 46-47.

³⁸ "A Call to Arms," *Lethbridge Herald*, June 26, 1916.

While Bryan's plea incorporated the emotional rhetoric that was prevalent during the early months of the war, it did not have much impact in terms of increased enlistment. His battalion was eventually disbanded, never having come close to full strength and in general terms, it appeared that recruiting in Southwestern Alberta had run its course. According to an August 1916 report, a total of 2300 men had enlisted within the city of Lethbridge alone and of those, 1500 were residents of the city, which corresponded to 15 percent of the city's population being recruited for service.³⁹ By this time, nearly everyone who had met the recruiting standards and was inclined to enlist of their own volition had already signed up and it was the general consensus within the community that in this regard, they had done their part. As a result, no further units were raised within Southwestern Alberta and all recruits and later conscripts served as reinforcements to various existing units in the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

An analysis of how imagined community was both reflected and shaped by the recruiting and enlistment process would not be complete without some consideration as to the matter of conscription. While in a national context, the main divide over the issue was drawn roughly along French-English and Catholic-Protestant lines, this was of little consequence in Southwestern Alberta. According to Rutherfordale, "In Lethbridge, majority opinion favoured selective conscription..."⁴⁰ William Buchanan had previously used his newspaper primarily as a platform to encourage support of the war effort through recruiting and enlistment campaigns and also by rallying support for the Patriotic Fund and other similar home front efforts. This changed dramatically in 1917 as the nation faced three difficult and divisive political crises relating to conscription, the extension of

³⁹ "Over 2300 Fighters Have Enlisted in Lethbridge." *Lethbridge Herald*, August 16, 1916.

⁴⁰ Rutherfordale, 165.

parliament, and changes to enfranchisement laws. In short, Buchanan voted in favour of conscription and against the extension of the Borden Government and changes to the proposed enfranchisement laws. During the course of the year, he spoke directly to his constituents through the pages of the *Herald*, which had acquired the satirical nickname of ‘Buck’s Bible.’ Rutherford notes that Buchanan’s influence was “unsurprisingly obvious.”⁴¹

Although compulsory service was generally supported by the citizenry, concerns were raised about economic disparity and wartime profiteering. A number of local farmers and labour organizers gave their vocal support to the ‘Conscription of Wealth’ movement. Rutherford describes this movement briefly as follows: “If the nation’s young men were to be called upon to serve, then the nation’s affluent should be required to contribute as well...”⁴² In the local context, these attitudes are inherently unfair in that the social, economic, and political elite had not shirked their responsibilities in terms of the enlistment of either themselves or their family members. In this context, conscription of wealth might mean that the affluent or elite were morally, if not legally bound to use their wealth to support the war effort, but it did not mean that they had not done their part in providing manpower on the frontlines. At a time when partisanship ran deep in the newspaper business, the *Herald*’s Conservative counterpart, the *Telegram*, supported Buchanan’s position and questioned the motivations of the ‘Conscription of Wealth’ supporters, noting that the term was vague and used with a certain amount of ‘glibness’ by people who gave no specifics as to what they actually meant. It was the opinion of the

⁴¹ Ibid, 166.

⁴² Ibid, 167.

editor of the *Telegram* that conscription of wealth should be “a sequel of conscription of men.”⁴³

For his part, Buchanan chose to speak directly to his constituents and readers by addressing the contentious issue through the pages of the *Herald*. On 18 July 1917, in a front page article entitled “W.A. Buchanan Gives Reasons for Voting Against the Extension,” Buchanan explained his position as follows: “I supported conscription and will vote for it on the third reading too, and I want the people who elected me in 1911 to decide whether they are prepared to renew their confidence in me or not...Since I have voted for conscription I do not seek to avoid facing my constituents and asking for their endorsement [sic] and should I obtain it, then I feel that I will be better able to serve my constituents and my country in these critical times.”⁴⁴ In terms of Buchanan’s support and eventual participation in the Unionist Government, he put forth his views in an editorial dated 20 July 1917, which read in part: “Too many people, Grits and Tories alike, are thinking of saving the party, rather than saving the nation. What Canada needs at this moment is a win the war government composed of men of all parties, whose whole thought will be ‘winning the war.’ Such a government could appeal to the people, with an assurance of support from all our citizens who want the war won.”⁴⁵

Buchanan’s ‘win the war’ sloganeering was readily accepted by the conforming community identity groups. It is not surprising that this group, who had always been enfranchised, turned out in support of Buchanan in the 1917 Federal Election, which Buchanan won easily, more than doubling his Liberal opponent’s vote total. As

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ “W.A. Buchanan Gives Reasons for Voting Against the Extension,” *Lethbridge Herald*, July 18, 1917.

⁴⁵ “Editorial,” *Lethbridge Herald*, July 20, 1917.

Rutherford notes, Buchanan's opponent, Lambert Pack was a relatively unknown farmer from Raymond, and yet he garnered a respectable 2468 votes.⁴⁶ This can be explained in part by the conscription of wealth movement, but was perhaps more indicative of the rural-urban political divide shaping in Southwestern Alberta.

Perhaps even more important to the greater imagined community of the region was the question as to who had been excluded from the election. Buchanan was mindful of the members of the non-conforming community identity groups, such as citizens of Central and Eastern European descent, who had been disenfranchised by the new legislation. This was expressed in a re-print of a Buchanan speech in parliament that read in part as follows:

I have appealed to them ever since this war commenced on behalf of the Patriotic Fund and other patriotic causes: I have explained to them why we are engaged in this war, have pointed out to them that we were fighting for freedom, liberty and justice, fighting for the national honour and for the pledged word. Now I cannot go back to them and say "I have urged you to support this cause and to be loyal to this country," and then defend a course that would mean that I, a member of this parliament, had broken the pledged word of Canada to these people when they became citizens of this country. This is my position. I do not think it is fair for this parliament to charge that every man of German or Austrian birth in this country is disloyal. I know men who are not of those nationalities; some of them are Canadian born; yes and some of them and British born, and they have not displayed any great loyalty to this country or to our allies since this war commenced. Why should they not also be deprived of the franchise?⁴⁷

While Buchanan spoke with eloquence and passion in regards to his newly disenfranchised constituents of Central and Eastern European descent, he had also chosen to remain silent three years earlier when some of these same people fell victim to the prevalent mood of prejudice and paranoia. This calls to question his sincerity in defending the non-conforming groups who had been wronged, as opposed to his political

⁴⁶ Rutherford, 177.

⁴⁷ "Buchanan's Speech to Parliament," *Lethbridge Herald*, July 20, 1917.

astuteness in reading the public mood and adapting his position to ensure his re-election.

In fairness to Buchanan, he did argue against the limitations imposed on the enfranchisement of women, noting that if war service were to be rewarded by the right to vote, then Canadian women had more than earned it. In terms of other non-conforming groups, Buchanan notes that visible minorities like the Chinese and Japanese had also supported the war effort and as such, should be considered for enfranchisement.⁴⁸

Considering the nativist attitudes prevalent in Alberta at the time, this was a risky position and yet, Buchanan advocated for a wide range of non-conforming groups, putting forth his beliefs in parliament, publishing them in the *Herald*, and allowing the voters to make the decision.

If war service was a primary factor in the consideration of specific groups for enfranchisement, Buchanan was correct in his assertion that non-conforming groups had contributed. In terms of his constituency, primary among these groups were the First Nations, Chinese, Japanese, and Mormons.⁴⁹ In fact, much of what makes the imagined wartime community of Southwestern Alberta distinct from other parts of Canada lies within the wartime service and experiences of these non-conforming groups. The next chapter of this thesis addresses the limitations and challenges placed upon these community identities and how their participation in the war effort both reflected and shaped imagined community.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ It is important to note that Mormon men had been accorded the right to vote, while no members of these other groups had received the franchise. Their designation as a 'non-conforming group' derived more from their unique religious practices.

Chapter 5 – Great War Imaginings: Everyone in their Place

During the early years of the twentieth century, both the imposed official identity and evolving imagined community of Southwestern Alberta were influenced by prevailing nativist sentiments, especially as relating to visible minorities. This was evidenced in the recruiting practices for the Lethbridge-raised units, where none of the three artillery batteries included members of visible minorities, particularly African-Canadians, First Nations, Japanese-Canadians, or Chinese-Canadians. This lack of diversity in recruiting and enlistment was very much in line with the national experience, particularly during the early months where the response to recruiting was so strong that officers could afford to be ‘selective.’ This is not to say that members of visible minorities and other non-conforming identity groups did not express an interest in serving, but rather that the numbers of conforming groups available for recruitment was so high that national policy could maintain a set of elitist standards in terms of who were suitable candidates for the Canadian Expeditionary Force. According to James W. St. G. Walker in his article, “Race and Recruitment in World War I: Enlistment of Visible Minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force,” “Canada shared the Western ideology of ‘race,’ and Canadian wartime practice generally was in step with the allies: until manpower needs at the front surmounted the obvious objections, killing Germans was the privilege of white troops. Even when called upon, members of Canada’s ‘visible’ minorities were accompanied overseas by a set of presumptions about their abilities

which dictated the role they were to play and which limited the rewards they were to derive.”¹

In general, the historiography relating to the service of visible minority and other non-conforming identity groups in Canada is still expanding. Among the most developed research in this regard is the service of African-Canadians, particularly those who served in the ranks of the No. 2 Construction Battalion (Coloured). While the history of this unique group is well researched, there is little information regarding the experiences of African-Canadians who lived in Western Canada and enlisted for service in the First World War. In terms of Southwestern Alberta, this population group was small and did not grow much during the immigration boom years immediately preceding the war. This was due to specific efforts undertaken by community leaders to discourage and prevent the immigration of African-Americans, as documented by Howard Palmer in *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta*. When it was proposed that a group of approximately 1000 African-Americans from Oklahoma be allowed to homestead near Edmonton, community leaders from Lethbridge joined their counterparts from across Alberta in urging Ottawa to bar their entry. Well known Lethbridge Conservative, C.E. Simmons represented the local sentiment at a rally in Edmonton, stating that Lethbridgians “Want No Dark Spots in Alberta.”²

The 1916 City of Lethbridge Census reported the population of ‘Negroes’ at seven. The remainder of this population group were dispersed primarily in the foothill ranching areas to the south and west of the city. There is no available information as to

¹ James W. St. G. Walker, “Race and Recruitment in World War I: Enlistment of Visible Minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force,” *Canadian Historical Review* 70, no. 1 (1989): 2-3.

² Palmer, 37.

the number of Afro-Canadians from the area who served, but it is likely that if there were any who did volunteer for service, they would have been assigned to the No. 2 Construction Battalion.

The Chinese-Canadian population in Lethbridge was significantly larger than that of their Afro-Canadian counterpart. The 1916 City Census provides demographic information for twenty-nine specific ethnic groupings and of these, the Chinese population was the ninth largest, with a total of 118 residents or 1.3% of the city's population. During the previous decade, the Chinese, more than any other non-conforming identity group in Lethbridge, were subject to segregation and discrimination. In terms of military service, it is not likely that any of Lethbridge's Chinese population enlisted for service in the First World War. There is scant information on the experiences of Chinese-Canadians in general during the war years and what little is available, often tends to group the Chinese and Japanese experiences together, referring to them collectively as 'Asians.' As Palmer notes, the experiences of Chinese- and Japanese-Canadians in Alberta at this time were very different. While each group experienced discrimination, the anti-Chinese sentiment was far stronger in Alberta, whereas the anti-Japanese sentiment was most intense in British Columbia.³

There is evidence that the local Chinese population did actively support the war effort and it is in the documentation of this that prevailing racial attitudes within the imagined wartime community become apparent. A 25 May 1917 article entitled "Ching Chong Chinaman is Saving Waste for Led Closs," appeared in the Lethbridge *Herald*, with the author being identified only as L.H.K. While the article is ostensibly written as a

³ Ibid, 34.

piece on the experiences of a local Red Cross volunteer who is canvassing Chinese laundries in support of the war effort, it reads as a stark reflection of the prevailing attitudes towards the city's Chinese population. Neither the volunteer, nor the laundries are identified by name and the article conveyed a clear message that Chinese-Canadians were anxious and willing to do their part for the war effort. It is the manner in which the article was written that demonstrates much about the racial attitudes of the day. It began as follows:

I was fortunate when visiting my first Chinese laundry to find the celestial proprietor understood English pretty well. Not only that, but he was willing to help, and was eager other of his countrymen should also help the Red Cross. "Oh, less, me savee waste for the Led Closs," he said almost before I asked him. I thanked him and was about to depart when he exclaimed: "Wait; me litee someling." On the margin of the circular I had handed him he wrote something that I took for Chinese. "Showee lat to China boy; he understand." He handed me back the circular with a smile that was childlike and bland.⁴

The writer goes on to talk about visits to other laundries where the volunteer seeks out the "most intelligent looking China boy," in an effort to secure donations for the Red Cross. The communication problems faced are described in a portion of the article as follows: "I tried to explain my errand to this man from the land of the rising sun in abbreviated English. This is, I am told, the right kind to use to make a Chinaman understand. This Chinaman didn't. His non-understandability was simply perfect. Neither by look, word or gesture did he show he understood a word of what I was saying." When the Red Cross volunteer was finally successful in communicating her request to the Chinese laundry workers, the article reported their response as follows:

⁴ "Ching Chong Chinaman is Saving Waste for Led Closs," *Lethbridge Herald*, May 25, 1917.

“Savee waste for le Led Closs; tellee lady,” he replied. “Me savee for le Led Closs,” he added gleefully.”⁵

In analysing the content of this article, particularly in terms of how it both reflected and shaped imagined community, it is evident that the Chinese-Canadian community in Lethbridge was subject to the most intense forms of paternalism and racism. A piece that was meant to document the positive wartime contributions of this group of citizens, in effect served to perpetuate the worst possible racial stereotypes and further marginalized an already vulnerable group. The fact that an article such as this could be published in a respectable, mainstream newspaper, without apparent public outcry in subsequent issues, would indicate that the attitudes exhibited by the author were at the very least tolerated by the community.

While members of the local Afro- and Chinese-Canadian communities were virtually excluded from active service in the First World War, the experience of the Japanese-Canadian community was quite different. Although there was a fairly large and growing Japanese population in the coastal regions of British Columbia, there was no significant Japanese population anywhere else in Canada – with the exception of Southwestern Alberta. When the Mormon-owned Knight Sugar Company opened near Raymond in 1903, there arose a shortage of agricultural workers in an already booming labour market. The coal mines around Lethbridge and the Canadian Pacific Railway were already experiencing a labour shortage and a small influx of Japanese workers, brought in by the Canadian Nippon Supply Company was useful in filling the immediate need.⁶

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ David Iwaasa, “Canadian Japanese in Alberta, 1905-1945” (unpublished paper, University of Lethbridge, 1972), 5.

Settlers in the region had been supportive of the notion of Alberta as a 'white man's country,' and without this economic boom period, it is likely that the Japanese immigrants would not have been tolerated. Many Albertans, including census officials, could or would not differentiate between those of Chinese and Japanese descent. Usually they were grouped together and labelled as 'Asiatics' or 'Orientals.'

Palmer notes that in reality, the Japanese settlers were quite different from the Chinese, who had been in the area for several decades. The Japanese preferred to live in rural areas, while the Chinese lived in towns and cities. The Japanese were also believed to be more aggressive, ambitious, and hardworking, while the Chinese were deemed unambitious and assumed to be suitable only for menial labour, often being relegated to 'women's work,' such as cooking, cleaning, and operating laundries. They were essential in a community of bachelors, such as early Lethbridge, however, they were treated with disdain by a large portion of the citizenry. While neither culture was considered to be 'assimilable' into Canadian society, the perceived Japanese values of honour, duty, and self-sacrifice were considered to be more in line with the imperialistic imposed official identity, making them the more preferable of the 'Asiatic' immigrants.⁷

In his article, "Anti-Oriental Sentiment in Alberta, 1880-1920," Palmer notes that by 1911, there were 244 Japanese-Canadians living in Alberta. The majority of this group resided in Southwestern Alberta, particularly in the communities of Raymond and Hardieville. They were employed primarily as miners, railway labour, and in the agricultural sector, mainly on sugar beet farms.⁸ In his unpublished paper, "Canadian

⁷ Palmer, 31-33.

⁸ Howard Palmer, "Anti-Oriental Sentiment in Alberta 1880-1920," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 2, no. 2 (December 1970): 42-43.

Japanese in Alberta, 1905-1945,” David Iwaasa asserts that although early Japanese immigrants did experience discrimination in the larger community, they were able to assimilate fairly well within their workplaces: “The existence of a great number of other nationalities such as Italians and Eastern Europeans created a very cosmopolitan atmosphere and most likely facilitated acceptance and integration.”⁹

It was during the years of the First World War that the local Japanese population was further distinguished from its Chinese counterpart. This is evidenced in the experiences of the Japanese – both on the home front and in the opportunity afforded to them for active military service. For its part, the Lethbridge *Herald*, which had printed the Red Cross story that denigrated the Chinese community, took a very different tone as it relates to their coverage of the Japanese community participation. In an article entitled “Raymond Japs are Donating to Fund,” the *Herald* documents their participation as follows: “A sum in the neighbourhood of \$70 has been collected by the local Japanese colony and paid into the Patriotic Fund here. This is a fine example of the friendship and devotion to the common cause of our Asiatic allies. Several boys from the Raymond colony have also enlisted with the Japanese regiment now being recruited in Vancouver.”¹⁰

The regiment referred to in the article, was a quasi-military group of naturalized Japanese immigrants who had seen the war as an opportunity to pave the way to full citizenship. More than 200 individuals had joined and trained at their own expense, with hopes of being taken on en masse by an existing Canadian Expeditionary Force

⁹ Iwaasa, 10.

¹⁰ “Raymond Japs are Donating to Fund,” *Lethbridge Herald*, June 4, 1917.

battalion.¹¹ With the anti-Japanese sentiment in British Columbia being so pervasive, their aim of enlisting within that province was unrealistic. In his book, *We Went to War: The Story of the Japanese Canadians Who Served During the First and Second World Wars*, Roy Ito notes that the Japanese community, having exhausted all possibilities for enlistment in British Columbia, approached Major-General E.A. Cruikshank, commanding officer of Military District 13 (Alberta) in April 1916. Ito documents a conversation between the organizers of this group and the general as follows: “In reply to Cruikshank’s query, ‘Why Alberta?’, Iiyama explained that the people of Alberta had always treated Japanese equally and fairly. ‘We have quite a number living in southern Alberta, and the Japanese people feel there would be less difficulty in joining Alberta battalions.’”¹²

Cruikshank, who had been experiencing recruiting challenges, was not adverse to the idea. He promptly sent letters to the nine Alberta-based battalions currently recruiting and received positive responses from two, both of which were based in Southwestern Alberta. The 191st Battalion Bryan’s Buffaloes, based out of Fort Macleod, offered to take 250 Japanese, while the 192nd Crow’s Nest Pass Battalion, could take 200 initially, but was open to receiving more at a later time. The 175th Battalion, based out of Medicine Hat, would later join the two aforementioned groups in heavily recruiting within the Japanese communities of Alberta and British Columbia. The 13th Canadian Mounted Rifles, who recruited in the rural areas to the south and west of Lethbridge, had enlisted more than forty from the Raymond area at about the same time.¹³

¹¹ Roy Ito, *We Went to War: The Story of the Japanese Canadians Who Served During the First and Second World Wars* (Stittsville: Canada’s Wings Inc., 1984), 18-19.

¹² *Ibid*, 30.

¹³ *Ibid*, 31.

The only Southwestern Alberta battalion who did not express an interest in these Japanese recruits was the 113th Battalion Lethbridge Highlanders. At the time of Cruikshank's inquiry, they were about 200 men short of full strength and if they had taken on the Japanese, they would have reached full battalion status. There is no evidence that they responded at all to the inquiry. There are two possible factors that influenced the 113th Battalion's lack of interest in these Japanese recruits. As Palmer notes, Alberta's urban areas provided far more fertile ground for the growth of nativist sentiments than did the rural areas. The 1916 City of Lethbridge Census indicates that there were only nine citizens of Japanese extraction, so it is likely that Lethbridgians had little contact with this immigrant group and were likely more discriminatory in their attitudes toward them. They aspired that the Lethbridge Highlanders would represent the city on the battlefields of Europe and a clearly sizable Japanese contingent would not be representative of the actual demographic makeup of the city, nor would it be in line with the imposed official identity and imagined wartime community. Secondly, the local citizenry was still holding on to the idea that the battalion would be kilted. The image of visible minorities being attired in Scottish battledress was not the vision that supporters of a Highland unit would have imagined.¹⁴ It is further interesting to note that at least one local artillery battery was recruiting at the time, but they were not approached by Cruikshank, likely because artillery batteries did not experience the same recruiting challenges as their infantry counterparts. Regardless, it soon became a moot point as the Militia Council, headed by General Gwatkin, did not forbid Japanese enlistment, but placed restrictions on how they could enlist.

¹⁴ Clifton, 16-17.

The Militia Council had informed the interested battalions that they could not enlist all of the potential Japanese recruits as a group, but that each battalion could take on some as individuals.¹⁵ The 192nd Crow's Nest Pass Battalion put forth a unique argument in support of an en masse enlistment: "The feeling among the labour element here is that since they have to compete with the Japanese it is only fair that the Japanese should do their share in the defence of the Empire. They also feel that to leave the Japanese here in safety and in possession of good jobs will not work to their advantage on their return. Generally speaking, the feeling is very much in favour of the enlistment of the Japanese."¹⁶ While the feeling might have been similar in the large mining sector at Lethbridge, it was never expressed. Several miners of various Central and Eastern European origin were recruited into the Lethbridge Highlanders, but this was the extent of the battalion's diversity.

What Gwatkin and the Militia Council knew that most of Southwestern Alberta did not was that all of the groups who did recruit Japanese-Canadians into their ranks were in fact, reinforcement battalions, destined to be broken up immediately upon arrival in Britain. This was the main reason Gwatkin did not want all of the Japanese in one group, as he believed that it would be difficult to disperse them to frontline units, who would be leery of taking so many Japanese all at once.

The total number of Japanese-Canadians who enlisted, primarily with Alberta-based units, is documented to be 222. Most did see frontline service with the 10th, 31st, and 50th Battalions, all based in Alberta, as well as the 52nd Battalion from Ontario.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ito, 30.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ito provides background information regarding the service of each Japanese-Canadian who had military personnel record files available in his work. They can be found at the end of his first chapter.

Iwaasa notes that of the men he interviewed, most appeared to have enlisted for the ‘standard reasons,’ as well as the hope that service might be rewarded with the franchise. He further notes that the Japanese-Canadian veterans from Southwestern Alberta reported that they did not experience significant prejudice and felt that they were treated like any other soldier by their comrades and officers.¹⁸ This assertion is supported by a collection of written and oral history accounts documented by Roy Ito.

In some ways, the experience of the First Nations and Inuit peoples who enlisted during the First World War is similar to that of the Japanese-Canadians.¹⁹ One of the main commonalities was that each group felt that service in the Canadian Expeditionary Force might be the catalyst that would bring their people full citizenship status, particularly in terms of the franchise. First and foremost, the First Nations people of Canada were confident in their relationship with the Crown.²⁰ They had a basic understanding of the rights that had been guaranteed under the various treaties and believed their allegiance lay with directly with the monarchy and not the Canadian government. If they chose to support the war effort, it would be as an ally of the Crown. The Canadian authorities had not granted them the rights of full citizenship and so they believed and many others agreed, that the federal government could not compel them to fight.²¹ While the Japanese population was small and localised, the First Nations and Inuit population was distributed across the country and numbered 107,221 persons at the

¹⁸ Iwaasa, 28-29.

¹⁹ For the purposes of this thesis, I will be using the terms First Nations and Native to encompass all of the various groups of indigenous people. The term ‘Indian’ will be utilized only when sourced from contemporary documents or when referring the reserve, which usually includes the word somewhere in its title. It is not possible to distinguish the Metis people through their attestation documents and so regrettably, they will not be examined in this thesis.

²⁰ L. James Dempsey, *Warriors of the King: Prairie Indians in World War I* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 1999), 6-10.

²¹ *Ibid*, 17-19.

outbreak of the war.²² While Japanese cultural practices were distinctively homogenous, the same was not true of the First Nations and Inuit. According to Timothy Winegard, author of *For King and Kanata: Canadian Indians and the First World War*, “Indians did not represent a monolithic, homogenous entity; rather they were a diverse collective of nations with distinct cultures, histories, and experiences.”²³

The official position in both Britain and Canada was that First Nations people were very different from other visible minorities. As the original inhabitants of the land, they could not be considered ‘foreigners,’ and attitudes towards them ranged from stereotypes of being culturally and physically inferior to the glorification of the image of the ‘noble savage.’²⁴ The most prevalent of all positive and negative stereotypes ascribed to First Nations people at this time was that their men possessed magnificent warrior abilities and were biologically predisposed to be talented scouts and snipers. This, coupled with the fact that many First Nations men of service age were educated within the residential school system and assimilated to the dominant Anglo-Canadian culture, made it far more likely that they could be accepted within the culture of the Canadian military. However, in the early months of the war when potential recruits were plentiful, First Nations men were occasionally permitted, but never encouraged to enlist.

Most scholars ascribe the official position which discouraged the enlistment of First Nations men to a memo distributed by the Militia Council to the heads of the military districts, which explained their fear that the “Germans might refuse to extend to

²² See Timothy Winegard’s First Nations populations for a breakdown by area and percentage changes.

²³ Timothy Winegard, *For King and Kanata: Canadian Indians and the First World War* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012), 66.

²⁴ Dempsey, 17.

them the privileges of civilized warfare.”²⁵ It is important at this time to make a clear distinction between enlistment and recruitment. In this context, enlistment is the act of an individual who voluntarily reports to a recruiting office and expresses an interest in joining a military unit. Recruitment involves an intentional act by a military representative in approaching individuals or groups and actively encouraging or persuading them to enlist.

In terms of the experiences of First Nations people in this regard, James Dempsey, author of *Warriors of the King: Prairie Indians in World War I*, notes that from August 1914 to December 1915, individuals could enlist, but were generally not encouraged. On 10 December 1915, a memorandum co-authored by the Ministry of Militia and the Department of Indian Affairs was circulated, authorizing the unfettered enlistment of First Nations persons provided they met all of the standard criteria. Dempsey further notes that many First Nations people signed up for service in 1916, but that it was not until 1917 that recruiting on the reservations was instituted.²⁶ Voluntary enlistment was one thing, but active recruiting was quite another and controversy soon arose regarding the process. Dempsey cites an example where 15 members of the Blackfoot reserve near Calgary were recruited by a military official who had attended a dance there. When the chief learned of the situation, he met with the commanding officer of the unit in Calgary and argued that their agent had promised that none of their men would be required to fight for Canada. As a result, these recruits were promptly released from service.²⁷ In terms of the

²⁵ Walker, 4.

²⁶ Ibid, 27.

²⁷ Ibid, 85.

Southwestern Alberta First Nations experience, most participation was as a result of voluntary enlistment, not active recruiting efforts.

Among the earliest First Nations enlistees in the Canadian Expeditionary Force was Albert Mountain Horse, son of Chief Mountain Horse of the Blood reserve near Cardston. Racial considerations aside, Mountain Horse was an ideal and enthusiastic recruit for the First Contingent. He had been educated at St. Paul's Residential School and had served in the school's cadet program, as well as the 23rd Alberta Rangers, where he had recently received a commission as a lieutenant and musketry instructor. On 23 September 1914, Mountain Horse took a voluntary demotion to private soldier and was placed with the Canadian Army Service Corps. By October, he was taken on strength by Calgary's 10th Battalion and was among the first group of Canadians to sail for Britain. By the spring of 1915, Private Mountain Horse was serving on the frontlines in Belgium. It was during this time that he and other members of the battalion fell victim to the first poison gas attacks of the war, with Mountain Horse being exposed on at least three different occasions. With his health severely compromised, Mountain Horse contracted tuberculosis and was invalided back to Canada. He arrived in Quebec on 18 November 1915 and passed away the next day at age twenty-two.²⁸ Private Mountain Horse had the distinction of being one of the early First Nations enlistees and also one of the first casualties.

The loss of Mountain Horse was keenly felt by his family and all members of the Blood tribe, as well as his former teacher and mentor, the Reverend Samuel Middleton. His parents had not been enthusiastic about his enlistment and believed that Middleton

²⁸ Ibid, 55.

had influenced Mountain Horse in this regard. They made it known to all that they would hold the reverend personally responsible if anything happened and in this case, Mountain Horse's mother, Sikski was quite serious. As Dempsey relates, "The grieving mother, Sikski, physically attacked the Reverend Middleton with a knife, blaming him for Albert's enlistment. If one of her sons had not intervened she might have succeeded in killing him. For weeks, Sikski came to Middleton's house seeking vengeance. Her anger subsided only after she understood that Albert himself had chosen to go to war, and that he had been prepared to die as a warrior."²⁹

On 28 November 1915, the body of Private Mountain Horse arrived in Fort Macleod via train. A lengthy article printed in the *Herald* the next day documented the funeral ceremonies held in honour of the fallen soldier. Sikski stood on the platform for hours awaiting the arrival of her son's remains and the article noted that her grief was "most pathetic to witness."³⁰ While the death of Mountain Horse might have served to drive a wedge between the local First Nations communities and their non-Native neighbours, this was not the case. The funeral was attended by community members from all walks of life and representatives from many official and unofficial groups, including military authorities, North West Mounted Police representatives, local politicians, religious officials, serving men and veterans, as well as his family and friends. The event was so large that entrance to the funeral was by ticket only and included a blend of traditions from the Blackfoot culture and traditional military honours. Reverend Middleton spoke to both elements in a eulogy that stated in part, "Mountain Horse was proud of his Indian blood, he had proved himself to be a man...as a soldier Mountain

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "Funeral for Private Mountain Horse," *Lethbridge Herald*, November 28, 1915.

Horse was keen, smart and intelligent and as a cadet leader had left his imprint on the boys of the St. Paul's cadet corps.”³¹

The loss of young Albert Mountain Horse was felt by many in Southwestern Alberta and for his brothers and friends, it served a much deeper purpose. In his book, *My People, The Bloods*, Mike Mountain Horse recalled his feelings as follows: “Reared in the environment of my forefathers, the spirit of revenge for my brother's death manifested itself strongly in me as I gazed down on Albert lying in his coffin that cold winter day in November 1915. Soon after the funeral...with my brother Joe Mountain Horse and a number of other Indian boys from neighbouring reserves, I enlisted in the 191st Battalion for service overseas.”³² The majority of local First Nations men who enlisted during the First World War did so at about the same time as Mike and Joe Mountain Horse.

Although the impetus for enlistment might have been the desire to avenge the death of one of their own, it is generally agreed that the local First Nations men that served in the Canadian Expeditionary Force experienced very little discrimination. The reception in Britain was very warm, being at times regarded as curiosities and often treated as celebrities. They did not experience notable discrimination in the trenches, either by their comrades or officers. In fact, First Nations soldiers were generally highly regarded as being brave and natural warriors. While this may have been a stereotype imposed upon them by an ignorant, but well intentioned public, who still remembered the Victorian notions of the ‘noble savage,’ many of the local men did not seem to mind. In fact, at times, they chose to highlight their cultural differences.

³¹ Dempsey, 56.

³² Mike Mountain Horse, *My People, The Bloods* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1979), 140-41.

This behaviour is evidenced in letters written by both Joe and Mike Mountain Horse, submitted by their father to the Lethbridge *Herald* for publication. They were written at a time when the brothers were both in hospital, having suffered wounds during the Last Hundred Days offensive. The content of the letters makes clear that in part, they are responding to someone's query regarding the taking of scalps and other souvenirs. In a letter dated 30 August 1918, Private Joe Mountain Horse explains; "We captured some thousands of prisoners, few hundred of the big guns, machine guns, rifles and other war material, too many to count; only we did not scalp any dead Germans, as it is too dirty a thing to do, as it is too inhumane." On the same day, Private Mike Mountain Horse wrote the following: "I am sorry I could not take German's weapons as they don't allow us to bring them across the waters, but I got some small stuff from Germans I killed myself."³³ While the taking of souvenirs was a common practice on both sides of the conflict, it is interesting to note that for these local First Nations soldiers, it was important that they be taken from individuals they had killed themselves and were viewed more as trophies, rather than as curios.

When the above mentioned letters were received and published in the newspaper, questions arose as to whether the Mountain Horse boys could be returned to Canada, which would spare the parents another tragic loss. For his part, Reverend Middleton advocated strongly for the family, sending the following message to the Department of Indian Affairs: "We received word that Joe Mountain Horse had been wounded. This makes both Joe and Mike their second casualty. Would it be at all possible to have them invalided home as soon as possible for I would not like a repetition of the Albert

³³ "Letters From The Mountain Horse Boys," *Lethbridge Herald*, August 30, 1918.

Mountain Horse affair?”³⁴ The request was denied, on the basis that it would be impossible to do such a thing for others in similar positions, but it likely would not have been welcomed by either living brother. In fact, the Mountain Horses had expressed very strong opinions relating to their commitment to their comrades and country. When Albert was hospitalized in 1915, he wrote the following: “I haven’t been up to the trenches for a long time now, the doctor said he was going to send me to the hospital. I told him I would sooner die like a man in the trenches than have a grave dug for me.”³⁵ While recovering from wounds in February 1918, Mike described his feelings on being laid up as follows: “I hate the idea of staying here doing nothing, and offered to go with the first draft leaving for the trenches. The officer in command said he admired my pluck, but he could not take me, so I am doomed to stay in this place for some time.”³⁶ Meanwhile, Joe who was also recovering from wounds and feared that he would likely be crippled for life, told his father that “I am glad that you did not try to stop us from coming over here as we have learned a lot by all the experience we had and are having.”³⁷ While this group of First Nations recruits had expressed that their main reason for enlisting was to avenge a fallen friend or brother, clearly they were committed to seeing the war through to the end. Like any other soldier, each would have had their own individual motivations, but it is possible that collectively, the imagined community of the Blackfoot warrior culture would have been a factor.

According to Dempsey, a total of twenty-five members of the two reservations located in Southwestern Alberta enlisted for service, including seventeen *Kainai* (Blood)

³⁴ Dempsey, 56.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 55.

³⁶ “Letters From The Mountain Horse Boys,” *Lethbridge Herald*, February 26, 1918.

³⁷ *Ibid*.

and eight *Piikuni* (Peigan).³⁸ As per the previous analysis of both conforming and non-conforming identity groups, certain conclusions can be drawn from an examination of which units these men enlisted with. First, it is noteworthy that there is, intentionally or otherwise, a separation between the two reserves in terms of units of enlistment.

Beginning with the Blood reserve, which is the larger of the two, it would follow that the higher proportion of recruits would come from this group, with the first being Albert Mountain Horse, who was the only Southwestern Alberta First Nations person to be a part of the First Contingent. The vast majority of the remaining Blood recruits enlisted at about the same time with the 191st Battalion out of Fort Macleod. Geographically, this reserve was located nearest to Fort Macleod and the enlistees included Mike and Joe Mountain Horse, as well as their friends and neighbours. Of the remaining recruits, the unit of enlistment for one was unknown and the other signed on with the 13th Canadian Mounted Rifles. This man enlisted on 22 March 1915, long before the death of Albert Mountain Horse and before the formation of the 191st Battalion.³⁹

The men from the Peigan reserve who enlisted were smaller in number, but far more diverse in terms of the types of units in which they served. Of this group of eight men, four joined up with the 13th Canadian Mounted Rifles, who had been actively recruiting in Pincher Creek and Cardston, which were the communities closest to the Peigan reserve. Two more enlisted with the 192nd Crow's Nest Pass Battalion, which again was geographically closer to the Peigan reserve than to the Blood reserve. Of the two remaining, one enlisted with the Canadian Railway Troops in February 1917, several months later than the other recruits. The last man, Private Pete Provost, is perhaps the

³⁸ Dempsey, 85-86.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

most unusual in terms of unit of enlistment, as he attested with the 113th Battalion Lethbridge Highlanders in the spring of 1916.⁴⁰ This was the same unit that ignored the communique regarding the enlistment of Japanese-Canadians who lived near the city and a search of the nominal roll for the battalion reveals that Provost was the only member of the battalion of a visible minority.

It should be noted that Provost was enlisted by Lieutenant-Colonel A.W. Pryce-Jones, commanding officer of the battalion and further than his next of kin was his brother, Charles, and that his address was clearly stated to be the Peigan Reserve near Brocket. Pete Provost was described as being Roman Catholic, with black hair and brown eyes. However, his complexion was listed as 'Fair.' Unlike some of the First Nations recruits, he was not identified as being 'Indian' and so like much of the policy regarding the recruitment of First Nations people, the situation regarding his enlistment is confusing to say the least. What is not called into question is the wartime service of Provost, as he was taken on strength by the 43rd Battalion Cameron Highlanders of Canada, following the disbandment of the 113th Battalion. He served on the frontlines until losing his life in August 1917. Provost was also the recipient of the Military Medal for bravery in the field, being one of twenty-nine former Kilties to receive this honour.⁴¹

In terms of the overall First World War experience, both the Japanese and First Nations participants were allowed to enlist and serve with minimal intervention or discrimination. While the Blood and Peigan experiences were very similar when placed within the broader Canadian First Nations context, the same cannot be said for the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ No citation for this award exists, but there have been numerous references to his receipt of it in the historical record.

treatment of Japanese-Canadians living in Alberta. In terms of the acceptance of this group, Alberta was by far more progressive and less discriminatory than British Columbia. The treatment of all visible minority groups in Canada during this time was more of a societal standard than a policy of institutionalized racism within the military. As Walker explains, “The treatment received by ‘visible’ Canadians did not originate with the military; recruitment policy and overseas employment were entirely consistent with domestic stereotypes of ‘race’ characteristics and with general social practice in Canada.”⁴²

Visible minorities were not the only non-conforming groups to experience discrimination within the greater imagined wartime community and through official doctrine and policy. In Canadian military history, one generally thinks of religiously non-conforming groups in terms of the Anabaptist sects and Jehovah’s Witnesses’ conscientious objectors. In Southwestern Alberta, it was the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) who formed the largest religiously non-conforming identity and as such, were often misunderstood, if not overtly discriminated against.

As non-conformers, the Mormons represented a dichotomy of sorts. On the surface, they appeared to be the ideal immigrants, being primarily British, American, or Canadian born and already embraced many of the traditional Anglo-Canadian values. By 1914, a sizable population of Mormons lived in Canada, almost exclusively in Southwestern Alberta, where in some communities such as Cardston, Magrath, and Raymond, they were a dominant majority. Like other immigrant groups, they tended to

⁴² Walker, 22.

settle together, but were unique in the manner in which they lived, which blended rural and urban practices. The towns created by Mormon immigrants included oversized lots with houses and barns, where families lived and kept livestock and equipment. Many of the Mormons who lived in towns owned and farmed land nearby, but chose the security of urban life over the traditional homestead existence. This practice had been adopted in the United States and then brought to Canada, primarily for reasons of safety and socialization.⁴³ As with anything different, their practices were often misconstrued by the older stock homesteaders, who considered the practice to be isolationist and thought the Mormons were not willing to adapt to or participate in the greater community.

Mormon citizens were further segregated from other immigrant groups due to some aspects of their religion. The most sensational of their unusual religious tenets was the practice of plural marriage, which had been officially disavowed by the church in 1890. Part of the decision to immigrate to Canada was rooted in the persecution they had been experiencing in the American West, primarily due to issues surrounding polygamy. When the initial group of Mormons arrived in Canada, they sent representatives to Ottawa to petition the Macdonald government to allow them to live a polygamist lifestyle.⁴⁴ When this was denied, members of the Mormon faith in Southwestern Alberta for the most part accepted this reality and discontinued the practice. There were few examples to the contrary, but this did not deter individuals and groups in the area who used rumours of widespread polygamy to foster prejudice against the Mormons.

⁴³ See *A History of the Mormon Church in Canada* for a complete history of their settlement of Southwestern Alberta, as well as a discussion of some of their unique religious and cultural practices, as well as how they were perceived by their non-Mormon neighbours.

⁴⁴ I have found no documented evidence that there was any discussion with the Macdonald government over the practice of polygamy and its potential legality in Canada. The statement has been made in some historical sources and persists in anecdotal accounts, as well as amateur histories.

Another less sensational, but important religious tenet practiced by the Mormons that set them apart from their neighbours was their abstention from substances they deemed harmful, primarily tobacco, alcohol, and caffeinated products like coffee and tea. Since many of the social activities of the day involved the consumption of one or more of these products, the abstinence of the Mormons was noticeable and further isolated them from their neighbours. Members of the social, economic, and political elite saw their value beyond these eccentric beliefs, but it was always a struggle for the Mormons in terms of greater acceptance in the community.

By the time the war was declared, there was a significant population of Mormons, but also in the same region, a much smaller colony of Mennonites had settled. For the uninformed, these two groups were conflated from time-to-time, which brought about the misconception that Mormons, like the Mennonites were conscientious objectors. The reality is that Mormons had a history of militarism, which stretched back to their earliest history in the mid-nineteenth century, where they established their own militia to protect themselves from government aggression and persecution from their non-Mormon neighbours.⁴⁵ American Mormons had fought for the Union in the Civil War, as well as in the Mexican-American War and the Spanish-American War. There was nothing in Mormon doctrine to prevent the enlistment of any member in any branch of the armed forces. During the years preceding the war, Mormons had served in both local militia units and it is notable that when the first local contingent was selected in August 1914, one Mormon man was chosen among the members of the 25th Battery. The 23rd Alberta

⁴⁵ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had organized their own militia, the Nauvoo Legion, which boys and men were encouraged to join to train and potentially defend their people from government aggression.

Rangers, a cavalry militia group, had a large squadron of volunteers from the Cardston area and the majority of these men were practicing Mormons.

In terms of service during the First World War, there is virtually no research, scholarly or otherwise, on Mormon participation and yet, aspects of their service were distinctive and contributed to the uniqueness of the greater Southwestern Alberta experience. Although religion was a field of information required on attestation forms, no contemporary statistics were kept which would demonstrate the number of Mormons or any other religious group within the Canadian Expeditionary Force. In terms of the Lethbridge-based units, research indicates that there was one Mormon enlistee among the ranks of the 20th Battery. However, the 39th and 61st batteries included no Mormons. As noted before, the 113th Battalion Lethbridge Highlanders were more diverse than their artillery counterparts. Of the 901 Kilties, 21 were of the Mormon faith, which translates to 2.3% of the battalion. While the infantry numbers may also appear to be small, this is not necessarily a reflection of a lack of Mormon participation. As the majority of the Mormon population lived in the areas to the south and west of Lethbridge, they tended to enlist with groups raised or recruited within those communities. Among these, the most prominent was the 13th Canadian Mounted Rifles.

Within the structure of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, there were thirteen battalions of mounted rifles. Only numbers one through five remained intact, while the other eight were broken up for reinforcements. While these groups were mounted, they were not cavalry in the traditional sense, but rather a blend of infantry and cavalry. The Canadian Mounted Rifles had their origins in the Boer War, where western frontiersmen were recruited to form special units of rifle marksmen with adept horsemanship skills. Of the thirteen battalions of mounted rifles, eight were raised in the western provinces and

they along with the traditional cavalry like Lord Strathcona's Horse, the Royal Canadian Dragoons, and the Canadian Cavalry Brigade perpetuated the frontier image of rugged 'cowboy like' warriors riding into battle. Practically speaking, it soon became evident that the cavalry-style of warfare was outdated. According to Cook, "While the cavalry continued to see itself as an elite arm – as it had been considered for centuries – its war on the Western Front was ultimately marked by disappointment and prolonged waiting for a rare chance to exploit an infantry break-in. The era of the warhorse was seeing its last."⁴⁶

For Albertans who lived in the areas to the south and west of Lethbridge, the frontier imaginings of mounted warfare were still important to their notions of imagined wartime community. During the militia years just prior to the war, members of the foothill ranching and Mormon communities had formed the bulk of the 23rd Alberta Rangers, whose identity was rooted in the militia cavalry ideal. When the 13th Canadian Mounted Rifles began recruiting in the very same areas where the Alberta Rangers had been popular, they attracted many former militiamen. One of the recruiting practices that worked well for the 13th Canadian Mounted Rifles involved the localized recruiting of blocks of individuals, making use of existing familial, religious, and social ties. This practice is documented in a Lethbridge *Herald* article from November 1915. While in this case, the idea is being suggested as a tactic for the Lethbridge Highlanders, it had been perfected earlier in the year by the 13th Canadian Mounted Rifles: "It might be possible to raise companies in a half dozen of the larger centres of the south with a local man as a lieutenant or captain in charge. This officer, if he is popular and knows his community well, should be able to get the men required to make a company. A Taber

⁴⁶ Cook, *At The Sharp End*, 88.

officer could recruit a Taber company, a Macleod officer a Macleod company, and so on throughout the south.”⁴⁷

The 13th Canadian Mounted Rifles began recruiting in March 1915, but it was not until several months later that a concerted effort was made to raise a Mormon contingent under the community leader recruiting scheme described above. By this time, several individual Mormons had already enlisted for service in Canadian Expeditionary Force units. It was not until Major Hugh B. Brown, ranking officer of C Squadron of the 23rd Alberta Rangers enlisted in November 1915 that plans began for the build-up of a squadron of Mormon volunteers in the 13th Canadian Mounted Rifles. Crucial to this plan was the idea that the officer placed in the forefront of recruiting would be popular and well respected within the target community and Major Hugh B. Brown certainly met this criteria. Not only had he commanded a predominantly Mormon squadron for eight years, but his familial and church ties were impeccable. He held many responsible and prominent positions within the church hierarchy throughout his lifetime, including an appointment to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in his later life.⁴⁸ Brown’s wife, Zina Card Brown was the daughter of Charles Ora Card, founder of Cardston, and Zina Young Card, daughter of church president Brigham Young. He was also a successful businessman and was well known and respected within both Mormon and non-Mormon circles.

Major Brown’s recruiting efforts are documented in the writings of Archibald F. Bennett, a well-known church genealogist and historian. In his memoirs, he recalled his

⁴⁷ Clifton, 14.

⁴⁸ The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is the second highest decision making body in the church. From it, the First Presidency and the Prophet-President are chosen.

own enlistment with the 13th Canadian Mounted Rifles as follows: “At a Sunday service held in the town of Taber, Alberta, on March 26th, 1916, Major Hugh B. Brown, then commanding “C” Squadron of the 13th, made a ringing call for recruits. Nine boys responded, ranging in age from eighteen to twenty-one. We had grown up together in the Priesthood Quorums, the Sunday Schools, and the Mutual; we had joined together in the fun of dance and had competed in friendly contests of sport.”⁴⁹ While this passage demonstrates the existing ties that recruiters were hoping to exploit, Mormon recruits also shared many of the standard motivating factors that influenced all soldiers. Bennett does note that for Mormons as a group, they felt a need to prove themselves: “They felt an obligation to assist the country of their adoption in its day of need. They loved not war for its glamour and adventure, but they resented deeply the imputation sometimes heard that Mormons were not loyal, and they stood forth in the ranks to disprove this assertion.”⁵⁰ While the challenges faced by the Mormon community did not include racial prejudice and the denial of basic citizenship rights as it did with the Japanese and First Nations, they nevertheless felt a need to prove that they were worthy of the citizenship rights that they enjoyed.

In his memoirs, Bennett documents trench life from the perspective of a devout Mormon, including anecdotal accounts of how his faith affected his wartime experience. In a service held just prior to the departure of the nine men who had enlisted in Taber, one of the elders had a vision that if the men did nothing that their mothers would be ashamed of, all would return home safe to Canada. This vision came to define nearly every aspect

⁴⁹ Archibald F. Bennett, “Memoirs,” (unpublished paper, Lethbridge).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

of the war experience of these men.⁵¹ Once in Britain, in an effort to keep the temptations of army life at bay, Bennett noted that the group, now eight in number as one had been held back in Canada, kept to themselves and sought out British Mormons while on leave. Bennett recalled that although their non-Mormon comrades were friendly, they questioned the determination of the eight men to resist the temptation of prohibited goods like coffee, tea, rum, and tobacco. He documents one such interaction as follows:

Our best friends persistently offered us tobacco. “No use refusing,” they told us, “when you are out in the trenches of France, standing all night up to your waist in icy mud, you will be glad of a little smoke or a little rum to warm you up.” “Oh, you won’t drink tea! Wait till you have marched all day with nothing to eat, and when you go for your rations at night there is nothing but tea issued! Wait till you are out wounded in No Man’s Land, perishing from thirst, and you see a shell hole, and you crawl over to drink some of the water that has seeped into it – and you find a corpse lying there! You will be glad of a little boiled tea won’t you? What if you are about to over the top, and you need something to brace you up – I guess you will take your share of the rum alright. There is no need to be squeamish about it; you will have to give in sooner or later; it is absolutely impossible to get along out there without them; you may as well give in now and enjoy them.” We could not argue down our friendly tempters. They must know, for some of them had been in France for months.⁵²

Bennett’s account continues with a reflection of how his faith helped him and his friends through the worst days of the war and an assertion that although they did feel despair and temptation, they managed to maintain their pledge to keep the faith. As a result, the promise was fulfilled and all eight made it home. Other Mormon boys who had been originally recruited for C Squadron by Major Brown were not so lucky. Most had been taken on strength by the Fort Garry Horse and they were among the heavy losses suffered during the few failed cavalry charges along the Western Front.

While his recruits served on the frontlines with other units, Brown had remained in Britain as a supernumerary officer. It was his ambition to become move up within the

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

hierarchy, just as John Smith Stewart had done, having been appointed a brigadier-general. Brown recorded his view with regards to promotion as follows:

I was in command of a cavalry unit in the Canadian Army. I had made rather rapid progress as far as promotions are concerned, and I held the rank of field officer in the British Canadian Army. And I was proud of my position. And there was an opportunity for me to become a general. I had taken all the examinations. I had the seniority. There was just one man between me and that which for ten years I had hoped to get, the office of general in the British Army. I swelled up with pride. And this one man became a casualty, and I received a telegram from London. It said: "Be in my office tomorrow morning at 10:00," signed by General Turner in charge of all Canadian forces.⁵³

Brown continues with a detailed account of the preparations he made for his meeting with the general. However, things did not go at all as expected and Brown maintains that rather than receiving his due promotion, he was faced with the reality of discrimination:

I walked smartly into the office of the General, and I saluted him smartly, and he gave me the same kind of a salute a senior officer usually gives—a sort of "Get out of the way, worm!" He said, "Sit down, Brown." Then he said, "I'm sorry I cannot make the appointment. You are entitled to it. You have passed all the examinations. You have the seniority. You've been a good officer, but I can't make the appointment. You are to return to Canada and become a training officer and a transport officer. Someone else will be made a general." That for which I had been hoping and praying for ten years suddenly slipped out of my fingers. Then he went into the other room to answer the telephone, and I took a soldier's privilege of looking on his desk. I saw my personal history sheet. Right across the bottom of it in bold, block-type letters was written, "This Man is a Mormon." We were not very well liked in those days. When I saw that, I knew why I had not been appointed. I already held the highest rank of any Mormon in the British Army. He came back and said, "That's all, Brown." I saluted him again, but not quite as smartly. I saluted out of duty and went out.⁵⁴

While Brown notes that he was very disappointed at the outcome of his meeting with General Turner, he did not relish the idea of returning to Canada to serve as a transportation and training officer. He describes his initial feelings as follows:

⁵³ Hugh B. Brown, "The Currant Bush," *LDS.org*, January 1973, <https://www.lds.org/new-era/1973/01/the-currant-bush?lang=eng>.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

I got on the train and started back to my town, 120 miles away, with a broken heart, with bitterness in my soul. And every click of the wheels on the rails seemed to say, “You are a failure. You will be called a coward when you get home. You raised all those Mormon boys to join the army, then you sneak off home.” I knew what I was going to get, and when I got to my tent, I was so bitter that I threw my cap and my saddle brown belt on the cot. I clinched my fists and I shook them at heaven. I said, “How could you do this to me, God? I have done everything I could do to measure up. There is nothing that I could have done—that I should have done—that I haven’t done. How could you do this to me?” I was as bitter as gall.⁵⁵

A survey of Brown’s personnel file does not indicate any entries pertaining to his religion, beyond what was recorded on his attestation papers. This does not mean that his account is inaccurate. It is possible that what he viewed were the personal notations made by the general or other official when reviewing Brown’s application for promotion. Like other anecdotal accounts, it is nearly impossible to verify all details, but it is certainly likely that considering societal attitudes towards Mormons at this time, discriminatory practices would have been evident within the military establishment as well.

While the Mormon experience was different in most ways from that of the aforementioned visible minority groups, they do share non-conforming identity status and were not fully accepted by the dominant Anglo-Canadian and Imperial British official identity. The experiences of each group were unique in terms of the cultural distinctions they brought with them and the “perceived assumptions about their abilities which dictated the role they were to play and which limited the rewards they were to derive.”⁵⁶ In terms of the greater Southwestern Alberta imagined wartime community, the participation or non-participation of non-conforming identity groups served to distinguish this regional experience from that of other Canadian communities.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Walker, 1.

Chapter 6 – Ghostly Imaginings

When the war ended in November 1918, there was no grand homecoming as there had been after the Boer War. Logistically, it would be several months before all of the serving men would make it home and they would not arrive in one group. During the course of the war, several men had come home, having been physically and mentally injured to such a degree that they were no longer useful on the battlefield. Of course, there was also the grim reality that hundreds of locals would simply never come home. It was these individuals around whom elements of the immediate post-war imagined community would be constructed. As with other elements of imagined community, reality was not central to the construct. It was the perception of the community's First World War experience which became defined by a preoccupation with ghostly imaginings.

Following the Armistice, there were celebrations in Lethbridge and the other communities of Southwestern Alberta, but these were muted and measured when compared to those seen at the declaration of war in August 1914. Although the majority of serving men had not yet returned home, Mayor W.D.L. Hardie spoke directly to them on behalf of Lethbridgians in a statement published by the *Herald* on 30 November 1918:

To Commissioned Officers, Warrant Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Men from the City of Lethbridge and surrounding district, and to all Canadians who have served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

In tendering you, on behalf of the City of Lethbridge and district, Christmas Greetings, we cannot express the sentiments of appreciation and gratitude adequately, that are in our hearts and minds towards you who have done so much for us at home in Canada, and for the great British Empire. You have passed through the very jaws of death and gates of hell that the attributes of Righteousness might continue to be the rule of life, and that the high ideal of the Anglo-Saxon race might prevail. You have accomplished the almost impossible for which we devoutly thank you. For your gallant deeds the people of Canada shall enshrine upon their hearts the images of the noble men who saved the very soul of our country.

Our dead we mourn sincerely and bow our heads in the sorrowful thought that those who made the last full measure of sacrifice and did more than all the rest, will never return. We will not forget – Canada cannot forget, their noble and enduring sacrifice on the altar of the Great War. We have the full measure of faith that they have been accepted at the Great White Throne as the redeemed of God. Peace is with them.

You have all had mothers, wives, and sisters – such mothers, wives and sisters – that the whole allied nations are proud of them. They are proud of the living soldier and mourn their losses but bear them bravely. Their heads hold high in proud memory of the departed ones.

All Hail to the Canadian Soldiers – living and dead – all hail.¹

While the content of Hardie’s statement did indeed set the tone for the community’s activities surrounding commemoration in the immediate post-war years, it also reads as a textbook example for Jonathan Vance’s notions on the construction of memory, myth, and meaning during and after the First World War. The mayor’s speech was in effect, the first public act of remembrance in Lethbridge. As Vance asserts in his work, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*, “Remembering...constituted a perpetual tribute to the fallen. If the sacrifices were fixed firmly enough in the public consciousness through various forms of commemoration, the myth of the war would become self-perpetuating and would not need Canadians to defend it.”²

While central to Hardie’s address was a tribute to the fallen, his language also reinforced the ‘truths’ upon which the recently melded official identity and imagined wartime community had been forged. In addressing the locals who served alongside the soldiers of Canada and the rest of the empire, there is an acknowledgement of all three levels of imagined community and a recognition that the community of Lethbridge had

¹ “Greetings from Lethbridge and District,” *Lethbridge Herald*, November 30, 1918.

² Vance, 201.

forged and strengthened connections through their participation in the war. Further to this, their participation in the war is described as being noble and beyond reproach, “having passed through the very jaws of death and gates of hell” to protect the attributes of righteousness. Righteousness is, in this case, synonymous with the ‘ideals’ of the proud Anglo-Saxon race. While this type of high diction was not uncommon during the war or immediately after, it went a long way to isolate individuals from non-conforming identity groups, many of whom served alongside members of the race whom Hardie is venerating. Vance maintains that “on a domestic level, historians have had to admit that the Great War was as divisive as it was unifying.”³ Although Vance is speaking primarily in terms of French-English relations, the statement can be applied in a regional context to the various conforming and non-conforming identity groups which have been discussed in this thesis.

Although a tribute to non-Anglo-Saxons is absent from the mayor’s remarks, he does mention the contributions and sacrifices of women, but only in the context of their relationship to their men who served. They are identified as “mothers, wives, and sisters,” not as nurses, labourers, fundraisers, or volunteers. The role of women is that of the mourner, not being acknowledged as active participants on the home front or overseas. Also of note, in terms of tone and content are the images of pious patriotism that are evoked and exemplified by the dead being given to the altar of the Great War and accepted by God on the Great White Throne. The imagery of the white throne is particularly powerful and divisive as it reinforces the idea that all that was glorious about the war and the men who served was Anglo-Saxon and Christian.

³ Ibid, 10.

While the mayor's address may have relegated the role of women and girls to that of wives, sisters, and mothers, for many practical aspects on the home front, including post-war commemorative efforts, it was this segment of the population that had always played a prominent role. While the contributions of women and girls was effected through both individual and group efforts, their role is perhaps best exemplified by the war-related works of the local chapters of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire. Since their inceptions in 1914 and 1917 respectively, the Sir Alexander Galt and Major Jack Ross chapters had undertaken many important tasks on behalf of the community and in support of the war effort. In addition to providing gifts and comforts to serving men, they raised thousands of dollars in support of the various war relief charities and organized countless community events. In terms of commemorative works, the IODE had been actively engaged long before the war was over. Their efforts are documented in a chapter history, which is available at the Galt Museum & Archives. Some of their commemorative efforts include the organization of tree planting at Battery Point on the east end of Henderson Lake, where Mrs. Sherlock supervised the members of various batteries in the planting of a tree for every Battery Boy who had been killed to that point.⁴ In 1917, a soldiers' plot was opened at Mountain View Cemetery and by 1919, responsibility for the care of this plot was accepted by the Galt chapter, who installed memorial gates and fencing, which are still in place today.

⁴ The name Battery Point refers to a location on Henderson Lake where the battery would fire blank rounds towards targets on the lake. It is interesting to note that the local historical narrative has suggested that the men of the 25th Battery were those responsible for planting the trees at Battery Point. The IODE narrative suggests that it was the men of the 20th and 39th batteries who planted the trees and this is more likely to be the case as the 25th Battery had been dissolved by the time the event occurred.

Not all of the IODE commemorative projects were embraced by the community. In the mid-1920s, the national body of the IODE produced thousands of reproductions of 18 officially commissioned Canadian war paintings, all of which then resided in government collections. According to Maria Tippett, author of *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War*, “It was hoped that the reproductions would serve to remind Canada’s school children of ‘the glory and valor of the Canadian men,’ of ‘the magnitude of the sacrifices of the sons and daughters of the Empire,’ and of ‘the terrible wastage of war.’”⁵ Most of the pictures selected tended to emphasize battlefield heroics and very few symbolized the wastage of war, a fact that did not go unnoticed by members of school boards, parent associations, and other stakeholder groups. As a result, schools across Canada began to refuse the donation of these reproductions on the grounds that it was generally believed that schools should glorify peace, not war and not further any divisiveness or hatred between ethnic and political groups.⁶ The local chapter histories do not speak in any great length to this project nor any controversies, simply stating that “the presentation of Memorial Pictures was made to St. Paul’s Indian School.”⁷

With all of the public schools in Lethbridge that had enthusiastically supported the war effort, it is surprising that the IODE would choose to place their one and only reproduction in a residential school located several miles outside of the city. Perhaps this can be explained by the group’s long standing interest in rural communities, with a particular focus on the schools in those communities and developing resources to better

⁵ Maria Tippett, *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 102.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Please see the Galt Museum’s fond for the local IODE chapters for a complete history of the Galt and Ross chapters.

these schools.⁸ It is also possible that the members may have chosen to avoid the controversy in other Canadian communities by donating the work to a residential school, where there was a significant reduction in the risk of a public complaint.

The events surrounding the memorial pictures was not the only commemorative project to face controversy. Constructing a tribute to or memorial of the war experience was a delicate task in that any act of public remembrance related to such colossal loss and suffering was inherently fraught with high emotion. For the citizens of Lethbridge and area, like many other Canadian communities, the largest and most important commemorative project undertaken in the immediate post-war years was the design and erection of a public memorial.

Public memorials took many shapes and forms, but for the majority of communities, the preferred memorial was a cenotaph or monument. While each community followed a unique path in their commemorative efforts, the end result served to satiate the need for a tangible communal artifact representative of the gamut of wartime emotions, from suffering and sacrifice to jubilant victory. According to Vance, “the act of commemoration stood as public affirmation of the people’s desire to keep the faith: the erection of a memorial was a tangible sign of the community’s determination to remember the fallen and, by extension, the values for which they had died.”⁹ For the citizens of Lethbridge, the realization of a memorial worthy of the sacrifice of their men would take more than a decade to accomplish from conception to dedication. The process

⁸ Both the Galt and Ross chapters were patrons of rural schools in the Lethbridge area. They frequently purchased classroom libraries and supplies, as well as patriotic decor in order that the rural schools could provide similar learning opportunities to their urban counterparts.

⁹ Vance, 210.

that unfolded during these years spoke as much to the values and attitudes of the community as it did to the matters central to commemoration.

Shortly after the war ended, a public meeting was held to explore ideas relating to the construction of a public memorial to Lethbridge's fallen. At this meeting, a five person committee composed of prominent men and women and chaired by Brigadier-General John Smith Stewart was formed. This committee was to work closely with a group of city officials, headed up by Mayor W.D.L. Hardie. With a proposed budget of \$20,000, the committee was instructed to explore design possibilities and report back at a later date.¹⁰ Although there would be challenges in selecting a suitable design and many other logistical concerns in the future, the project from its beginning was always under the control of the social, political, and economic elite of the community. This was the reality in communities across Canada and was not unique to Lethbridge, but any analysis of memory, meaning, and myth in the post-war years must acknowledge the heavy influence of the elite as purveyors of official identity. Vance speaks to this effectively, noting that; "As a result, the memorial becomes very useful to the historian. If it does not reveal what a community thought about an event (although I would argue that it *can* tell us quite a bit on that score), at the very least it reveals what elites *wanted* that community to think about an event."¹¹

Referring back to Hardie's address of November 1918, it becomes evident that seeds of collective memory had been sewn long before any organized efforts with respect

¹⁰ Brett Clifton, *They Never Came Home: The Lethbridge Cenotaph Project 1914-1918* (Lethbridge: Graphcom Printers Ltd., 2009), 3.

¹¹ Jonathan F. Vance, "Documents in Bronze and Stone: Memorials and Monuments as Historical Sources," in *Building New Bridges: Sources, Methods, and Interdisciplinarity*, ed. Jeff Keshen and Sylvie Perrier (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2005), 192.

to a memorial had been undertaken. This collective memory would be sanitized, romanticized, and idealized. As Marc Bloch explains, “Through the very fact of their respect for the past, people came to reconstruct it as they considered it ought to have been.”¹² With further analysis of the design of the Lethbridge cenotaph, along with the names of the individuals who would eventually be commemorated upon it, it becomes evident that the elite’s version of what “ought to have been” falls very much in line with Hardie’s visions of a war fought and won by proud, righteous, Anglo-Saxon Christians. An examination of the process and the finished product will indicate that the concept of memorializing the fallen came to mean memorializing those who died who fit the imposed official identity, with very little consideration of non-conforming identity groups.

The design process began with a proposal submitted by the mayor and committee for a cenotaph-type monument, a 10ft³ quarried British Columbia stone, to be flanked by captured German artillery guns.¹³ The stone monument would have bronze plaques affixed to it, which would bear the names of Lethbridge’s fallen and came with an estimated cost of \$12,600. When local veterans groups viewed the plans, they immediately voiced opposition to the idea of such a simple, impersonal monument, especially one which came in at such a cost.¹⁴ In September 1923, a public meeting was held at the mayor’s office, wherein various community stakeholders could meet with the

¹² Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 92.

¹³ There is often a great deal of confusion as to the differences between a cenotaph and monument. It is understood by the author that a cenotaph refers to tomb-style memorial, which houses no real bones. In the Lethbridge context, the large boulder could be evocative of the stone placed in front of Christ’s tomb, which would lead to the description of the proposal as a cenotaph. A monument usually involves more ornate décor, often featuring statuary, and is not limited to a tomb-type structure. It is believed that this is the context from which the committee made their decision. Both terms are often used interchangeably. The Lethbridge memorial has come to be almost exclusively referred to as a cenotaph.

¹⁴ Clifton, *They Never Came Home*, 3.

committee to address the veterans' concerns pertaining to the design and the cost. Hardie who took the opposition as a personal affront, refused to attend, but sent a written statement, which the *Herald* reporter documented as follows:

A letter was read from the mayor who resented the criticisms made on the present form of memorial. He said that he was so disgusted with these, after the committee appointed had gone through a lot of work in selecting the memorial, that he did not feel like attending the meeting...The idea of the cenotaph is one to which his worship is attached. Individuals were singled out by the mayor in expressing his objection to the criticisms, and he expressed himself pretty freely.¹⁵

A heated debate ensued, where various ideas, including utilitarian projects which might benefit "widows, orphans, and cripples" were discussed, as well as more sentimental ideas, such as a monument with statuary as favoured by local veterans groups. The end result was an almost unanimous rejection of the original design, with the various stakeholders feeling that deference should be shown to the wishes of the veterans. As a result, a new committee was struck, chaired by G.E.A. Rice, manager of the local branch of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce.¹⁶ While the names on the committee changed, the composition remained representative of Lethbridge's social, economic, and political elite.

The difficulties encountered in selecting an appropriate monument for Lethbridge's fallen were similar to those faced by other Canadian communities. Vance cites examples where commemorative efforts were changed, postponed, or even cancelled because citizens could not agree on a vision of what form of commemoration would be best for their community. As Vance notes, this often put veterans groups at odds with other community stakeholders. In this case, however, the situation was quickly resolved

¹⁵ "Report From the Memorial Committee," *Lethbridge Herald*, September 28, 1923.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

as the majority of those involved supported the veterans, not necessarily because they shared their vision, but because they believed that they had earned the right to have final say on the monument. Vance further explains that “regardless of the form chosen, the campaign to raise a monument often replicated the war experience by bringing together diverse elements of the community and directing their efforts towards a common cause.”¹⁷

In terms of a common cause, most citizens of Lethbridge would have very little input into the design, nor to the criteria as to who would be commemorated, but when it came time to pay for the memorial, participation was freely open to individuals of all identity groups. Tactics used in encouraging citizens to contribute to the memorial fund were reminiscent of the war experience. The most obvious of these was the publication of lists of donors in the *Herald*. Just as the names of recruits were published during the war, these lists documented the names of those ‘generous community minded individuals,’ as well as the amount which they gave, although the public was assured that no donation was too small. This tactic was, in effect, a passive form of peer pressure or public shaming. If one’s name did not appear in the paper, then the assumption could be made that they did not care about the sacrifice and suffering of the fallen. Also, if one did not give all that they could, it could then be assumed that they were not generous or that they were not economically successful.

The second, more overt, form of shaming tactic came in the form of the anecdotal account of the individual who put the cause before themselves. An example of this appears in a 13 January 1927 *Herald* fundraising report, which read in part;

One of the canvassers reported than when he with another went to a house they found

¹⁷ Vance, *Death So Noble*, 208.

a mother with eight children, who told them of her financial circumstances, saying that they were very hard up and had only enough to eat and that they could not afford to give anything. In the circumstances, the canvassers said that they could not expect anything. 'But,' said the mother, 'I would hate to see you go away with nothing, and for the sake of the splendid cause let me see if I have even a cent in the house.' In a few minutes, she came back with 25 cents, which she pressed on the collectors, who were forced to accept. This is the spirit of the 'widow's mite.'¹⁸ If the dead who are gone know this what a recompense it would be to them for all they went through in the war! The appreciation of this woman, though represented only by 25 cents, all that she could give, was beyond measure. That spirit in our midst should kindle the flame of generosity and add to the appeal for the memorial fund.¹⁹

Just as such tactics had worked for recruiting during the war, they were successful in fundraising for the memorial. In the end, public subscriptions totaling \$10,232 paid for the entire cost of the memorial and its installation, which amounted to approximately \$1 per citizen of Lethbridge.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of any public memorial lies within the elements of its design. The design favoured by the citizens of Lethbridge would fall within the characteristics of the traditional memorial. It was not to be celebratory, but more sombre and contemplative in nature. According to Vance, "traditional monuments were didactic, instructing passers-by what to remember, the person or the event, but also how to remember it."²⁰ The Lethbridge memorial would serve as a tribute to those lost in war and as such, the expectation was that it would incorporate a statue of a Canadian soldier in full kit, in an elevated position, to be placed within Galt Gardens, which was then a prominent location in downtown Lethbridge. The committee contracted noted Montreal sculptor, Coeur de Leon MacCarthy, who had created several celebrated

¹⁸ The term 'widow's mite' refers to a biblical story of a widow making a relatively small donation towards Christ's ministry, as compared with the donation of others of more sufficient means. The woman is rebuked for this by some apostles, but Jesus chastises the apostles for this as the woman's donation was proportionally higher to her income than that of the wealthy benefactors. Christ indicates that it is better in God's eyes to be a willing and generous donor and to give the most that you can afford.

¹⁹ "Fundraising At Good Swing For Memorial," *Lethbridge Herald*, January 13, 1927.

²⁰ Vance, "Documents in Bronze and Stone," 192.

memorials including those of the Canadian Pacific Railway at Montreal, Winnipeg, and Vancouver, as well as community memorials at Calgary, Trois-Rivieres, and Niagara Falls.²¹ While much of the logistical decision-making regarding the physical specifications were left to the experienced artist, the elements that made the memorial unique to Lethbridge were the subject matter of the sculpture and the inscriptions that the monument would bear. It is from an examination of these two elements that further clues to the evolving post-war imagined community can be ascertained.

With respect to the statuary that would crown the monument, the memorial committee did not simply choose an image from a catalogue or inventory supplied by the artist. Their contract with MacCarthy was for the commission of a statue to be sculpted based upon a unique image provided by the committee. To this end, A.E. Cross, a local photographer was directed to photograph an individual dressed in full Canadian Expeditionary Force battle kit in a variety of poses. From the portfolio submitted to the committee, two poses were chosen and these were placed in the window of Cross' studio, with the public being encouraged to view the photos and then attend a public meeting and vote on their preference.²²

Once the final choice was made, members of the committee met with MacCarthy, who had travelled to Lethbridge to inspect the site in order to determine appropriate proportions for the monument. In consultation with the artist, a decision was made to increase the overall size of the memorial, including the statuary. MacCarthy's opinions were documented in a *Herald* article which reported:

²¹ These are some of the more prominent monuments designed by Coeur de Leon MacCarthy in the post-war period, though he did design several more. A search on the internet will reveal that he sculpted and designed various types and styles of memorials across Canada.

²² Clifton, *They Never Came Home*, 4.

Mr. MacCarthy considers that the enlarged statue will be very effective and is keeping with the surroundings of Galt Gardens. He says that the increased size will ‘greatly enhance the memorial.’ The pose of the bronze statue is the one selected at a general meeting of subscribers to the memorial, a soldier with reversed arms. Mr. MacCarthy says that this will be a unique design and original as compared with memorials erected. He thoroughly approves of the pose, which, he says will be very effective from an artistic point of view.²³

Having had the final say in terms of location, proportions, and subject matter of the sculpture gave the citizens of Lethbridge ownership as to the memory and meaning that their memorial would symbolize and evoke. Following this meeting with MacCarthy, all matters relating to the artistic execution of the statue, through to its installation when completed were left to the discretion of the artist.

The Lethbridge monument was unequivocally a memorial to the dead, with the selected statuary representative of the fallen. It was public knowledge that the individual who posed for the photographs was a local veteran, but his identity was not then revealed nor was it ever called into question. He was, in effect, the Unknown Soldier, although not in the traditional sense as represented by an empty tomb or an unidentified body within a tomb, but nonetheless, the same feeling was present. In examining matters relating to the impact of war and loss on imagined community, particularly with respect to the idea of the Unknown Soldier, Benedict Anderson notes that

No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these monuments precisely *because* they are either deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them, has no true precedents in earlier times. To feel the force of this modernity one has only to imagine the general reaction to the busy-body who ‘discovered’ the Unknown Soldier’s name or insisted on filling the cenotaph with some real bones. Sacrilege of a strange, contemporary kind! Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings.²⁴

²³ “Final Design of Memorial To Be Chosen,” *Lethbridge Herald*, April 28, 1928.

²⁴ Anderson, 9.

Perhaps Anderson's thoughts on this issue explain the lack of curiosity on the part of the citizenry as to the identity of the individual who posed for the statuary. It was not until 1989 that any information surfaced as to the identity of the 'Unknown Soldier.' In an 11 November 1989 article entitled "Local Man Posed for Statue of Unknown Soldier," it was revealed that "Charles George Alexander Parke, a veteran of the First World War who died Sept. 18 at 96, posed for photographs taken by A.E. Cross in the 1920s." Parke had been a veteran of the British Expeditionary Force and had not lived in Lethbridge until after the war's end. In the article, his widow, Laura Parke is quoted as stating that "people didn't want it to be associated with just one soldier. There were a lot of young soldiers at that time and they didn't want to show any favouritism."²⁵

There is nothing in the contemporary reportage or official records which could confirm or refute Parke's claim, but if he is indeed the individual who posed, many other questions must be considered. Why would the community's elite choose an individual who had just arrived in the city and had not served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force as their representative soldier? Was this to preserve the integrity of the 'Unknown Soldier' aspect or a matter of expediency? Was a perceived outsider chosen, as Laura Parke claims, to avoid any feelings of favouritism? While these questions will never be answered definitively, the identity of the individual has little bearing on the symbolic significance of the monument. As Vance notes, the idea that a monument can remain static for decades or even centuries seems absurd and yet, in a sense, a monument is static, if only as a communal artifact which reveals to us a glimpse of who we were and what we valued.²⁶

²⁵ "Local Man Posed for Statue of Unknown Soldier," *Lethbridge Herald*, November 11, 1989.

²⁶ Vance, "Documents in Bronze and Stone," 185.

While much can be learned from the imagery and design of a monument, the text included within the design is equally revealing. Beginning with the positioning of the text, any understanding of this aspect requires a description of the memorial as it was originally designed and installed. To this regard, a contemporary description is found in the programme for the official dedication of the monument:

The memorial is erected in Galt Gardens and embodies the statue of a Canadian Soldier, surmounting a granite pedestal, the whole attaining a height of 23 feet.

The pedestal is of selected granite quarried at Granite Island, Vancouver, and measures three feet square at the cap, on the face of which is a bronze wreath of maple leaves and poppies, spreading through the die, sub-base and base moulding to six feet square, all placed on two base-steps of twelve feet and fourteen feet square respectively, and having a total height of fourteen feet.

The die is one solid block measuring four feet square at the top joint, spreading to four feet six inches at the bottom joint, and five feet six inches high. On the front face in three inch letters are the inscriptions: 'In Honor of Those Whose Names Endure;' 'The Great War 1914-1918,' and 'They Have Passed On, Leaving the Heritage of a Glorious Memory.'" On the back in two and a half inch letters are the names of the Battles in which the men of Lethbridge and District were engaged. The names of the Fallen, numbering 257, in one and one-quarter inch letters, are on the sides.

On the front of the sub-base are the words; 'Erected by the Citizens of Lethbridge and District.'²⁷

In terms of the content of the inscription, the message is brief, but powerful in its use of high diction and the evocation of both loss and glory. As Vance suggests, "high diction was retained as an interpretive framework not only because it was the only framework available, but also because of its emotional appeal."²⁸ In his book, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell notes that this style of language, which he terms "special diction," was borrowed from more masculine nineteenth-century literature, particularly boy's adventure books, male romances, and poems with Arthurian or

²⁷ Clifton, *They Never Came Home*, 18.

²⁸ Vance, *Death So Noble*, 91.

medieval themes. Fussell further provides a “table of equivalents,” which translates the meaning of war related “special diction.” For example, to die is to perish, to be brave is to be gallant, and the dead become the fallen and so forth.²⁹

In applying the notions of high or special diction to the Lethbridge cenotaph inscription, those who have died have passed on and although they are gone, there remains a heritage or legacy for future generations, who will be inspired by the sacrifices of these men. Who they were or how they died is less relevant, as their “glorious memory” remains in perpetuity. In addition to the high diction components, the language used also evokes a sense of immortality. Vance notes that the immortality motif was prevalent in all memorial styles: “The insistence on the immortality of the fallen was in part a consolatory act, but in a broader context, it was also part and parcel of making sense of the war.”³⁰

There are two other bodies of text on the original cenotaph that bear mentioning. The first being an inscription placed on the front and back, which documents that it was erected by the citizens of Lethbridge and district. This is not meant literally, as clearly not all citizens assisted in its creation or erection. Their role in the process was primarily to pay for it and this was a means by which they could acknowledge their support and give the community a sense of ownership. An examination of the rear of the monument reveals a lengthy list of battle honours.³¹ It is unclear if these battle honours were earned by the dead whose names are memorialized on the cenotaph, local units who served at the

²⁹ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 21-22.

³⁰ Vance, *Death So Noble*, 44.

³¹ The battle honours are listed in the order that they appear. Please note that they are not chronological: Amiens, Mons, Arras, Passchendaele, Cambrai, Sanctuary Wood, Festubert, St. Eloi, Hill 70, St. Julien, Hill 60, the Somme, Lens, Vimy, Loos, and Ypres.

front, or Southwestern Albertans in general. Clearly, these details were not as important as the idea that the soldiers from Lethbridge and area had fought in all the key battles and contributed greatly to the eventual victory.

Returning to the primary inscription on the front of the monument, it is evident that the style and content of the Lethbridge inscription is similar to that of other communities across Canada. A survey of similar memorials in other communities in Southwestern Alberta indicates that the themes of high diction, coupled with those of glory and immortality are prevalent. The Raymond memorial incorporates statuary that is very similar to that of the Lethbridge memorial, with a primary inscription that states “To The Enduring Memory of the Men of the Raymond District Who Died in the Great War 1914-1918.” An examination of similar monuments located in Cardston, Pincher Creek, and Fort Macleod reveals that all are composed of granite or marble blocks and pillars, with similar inscription themes to those seen in Raymond and Lethbridge.³²

The most unique of the Southwestern Alberta monuments is located in Standoff, a community on the Blood reserve. Composed of a large block of red granite with an etched tipi background design, the inscription is written in both English and Blackfoot. The English portion reads as follows: “In Honour of the Blood Tribe War Veterans Who Served Voluntarily to Ensure Our Safety and World Peace.” In addition to the obvious cultural elements present, it is interesting to note that this is the only monument which attempted to list everyone who served, not just the fallen and further, that it is also located adjacent to the Blood tribe residential schools monument. Further examination of these

³² The inscription on the Cardston Memorial reads as follows: “In Memory of Our Heroes Who Gave Their Lives in the World Wars.” The text on the Pincher Creek monument states: “Dedicated to the Glory of Those Who Served Their Country,” while Fort Macleod’s phrasing is as follows: “To Our Heroes Who Died in the World War 1914-1918.”

two monuments and the potential crossover of names would be interesting, but does not fit within the scope of this thesis. The placement of these monuments together does send a message worth exploring, as Vance notes that there is no such thing as an apolitical monument.³³ All of these memorials were erected at various times during the twentieth-century, with the monument at Standoff being the most recent and more reflective of modern trends, design, and values.

One element that the Lethbridge monument shares with its regional counterparts is the listing of the names of war dead and it is through an examination of these lists that the ghostly imaginings of the community become evident. Originally, there were 257 names inscribed on the Lethbridge cenotaph. While the identities of the individuals and what they represent are important, much can be learned from examining the motivations and criteria of those who compiled the list and the process by which it was effected. In speaking generally to the construction of memorial and nominal rolls, Vance asserts that;

The effort that went into assembling nominal rolls suggest that they were central to the nation's attempt to construct a memory of the war. This was especially true for honour rolls and memorial volumes. These were in part consolatory; the ability of the bereaved to speak the name of the dead signified a coming to terms with the death, after which the emotional healing process could begin. More importantly, the emphasis on naming the dead was intended to insure that the identities of the fallen remained prominent in the public consciousness; if the names were forgotten, the memory of the sacrifice would inevitably slip away as well. Indeed, it would be difficult to overstate the importance attached to recording the names of the dead.³⁴

Various churches, businesses, schools, and organizations in Lethbridge created honour rolls, both during and after the war, but for the greater community, it was the cenotaph that stood as the primary memorial for the city's fallen. Literally hundreds of citizens had lost fathers, sons, husbands, brothers, and friends, and most would never

³³ Vance, "Documents in Bronze and Stone," 194.

³⁴ Vance, *Death So Noble*, 119.

make the trip to the cemeteries on the Western Front where they were buried. As such, the cenotaph became a surrogate gravesite and a place where they could visit, pay homage, and grieve. Through an examination of the process by which the cenotaph's names were collected, it should be noted that as early as 30 November 1918, the Lethbridge *Herald* had published the first in a series of articles relating to various honour rolls and lists. This particular article titled "Lethbridge's Achievement in Men and Money During the War," contains a random list of every name from the community they could enumerate who had served during the war, without denoting those who had died. The notion that the list was described as an achievement demonstrates the attitude that long lists of names were associated with greater prestige. In this respect, Lethbridge was in line with other communities who competed to have the longest lists and claimed the distinction of having the highest enlistment and/or casualty rates. This theory explains the ever expanding criteria set by the Lethbridge committee as to whose names should be included on the monument.

W.A.R. Cocq, a member of the Lethbridge *Herald* staff who had lost his own son during the war, headed the effort to compile the cenotaph names. In November 1927, he called for individuals, churches, and organizations to submit names, noting that the criteria was that the fallen soldier had to have lived within fifteen miles of the city prior to enlistment.³⁵ A series of articles appeared in the *Herald* over the next five months urging the submission of new names and providing ongoing updates with a view to have the public review the lists for spelling errors, wrongful inclusions, and omissions. By April 1928, the process was completed, but the criteria had expanded, in that it was generally

³⁵ Clifton, *They Never Came Home*, 3.

agreed that to be eligible for submission, the individual must have met at least one of the following criteria: The soldier lived in Lethbridge or surrounding area, the soldier's family lived in Lethbridge or surrounding area, or that the soldier enlisted and/or served in a Lethbridge-based unit.³⁶

The expanded criteria and endless appeal, combined with the checking and rechecking of lists did not ensure that the final result was even remotely complete and accurate. The idea that every eligible name would be included was unrealistic. An examination of the names on the cenotaph, as compared to those that did meet the criteria and should have been included, but were not, serves to confirm contentions made earlier in this thesis regarding artillery versus infantry service and attitudes towards those of non-conforming community identities.

With consideration to the assertion that the local artillery units were looked upon more favourably than the infantry battalion raised in the city, a review of the list of individuals memorialized on the cenotaph, as compared to the casualty lists of these groups, demonstrates that the discrepancy in treatment also followed through into commemoration.³⁷ The 20th Battery had twenty of its members killed during the war. Of those twenty, twelve or 60% are commemorated on the Lethbridge cenotaph. The 39th Battery lost sixteen members, of which thirteen or 81% are remembered on the monument, while the 61st Battery suffered six fatalities, of which all are memorialized. A potential explanation for the lower percentages in the 20th Battery could lie in the fact that

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ For the purposes of this comparison, the original rolls and lists described earlier in this chapter will be utilized. The casualty statistics here will not reflect those that transferred into Lethbridge-based units, although there were cases of these men also being commemorated on the cenotaph. For the list of names on the cenotaph, the 1931 memorial programme listing of names has been utilized.

the battery was the only one of the three to recruit heavily in Calgary and Edmonton. This was because the unit was raised early in the war and efforts were being made to include men from all communities in the early deployments.

An examination of similar statistics for the 113th Battalion Lethbridge Highlanders, who were primarily raised in Lethbridge, indicates a very different result in terms of commemoration. Of the 175 men from the battalion who died during the war, only forty-eight or 27% are commemorated on the Lethbridge cenotaph. This figure is astonishingly low in light of the fact that the battalion had recruited heavily within the community and these recruits were lead to be believe that they were the city's finest and the rhetoric of the day indicated to them that they had done their community proud. Once again, it appears that the local artillery batteries completely overshadowed their infantry counterparts.

In looking for an explanation as to the large discrepancy in the percentage of artillery dead who are commemorated versus infantry dead, consideration should be given to the fact that the artillery was almost exclusively representative of conforming community identities; in this case, primarily either British Isles-, Canadian-, or American-born. The Kilties were far more diverse and as such, further examination of those included or omitted from the battalion will present information in terms of possible attitudes relating to racism or classism.

In examining the battalion's officers exclusively, it is evidenced that five were killed and all of them are commemorated on the Lethbridge cenotaph. The same is true in their artillery counterparts, where collectively, three officers were killed and the name of

each appears on the monument.³⁸ The difference between the two factions lies in where the officers were recruited from, as nearly all artillery officers were commissioned from within the Lethbridge area, while the majority of the 113th's officers were brought in from Calgary and Edmonton. Of the five officers from the battalion who died, only two were from Southwestern Alberta, while the other three had no connection to the community, other than their role as officers in the Lethbridge Highlanders.³⁹ Just as the military structure treated officers in a manner that elevated them from the enlisted men, similar attitudes were either purposefully or inadvertently demonstrated on the home front as well.

While the officers of each unit are included within the community's commemoration efforts, it is also necessary to consider the inclusions and omissions, particularly those relating to the 113th Battalion, in an effort to determine attitudes towards race and class within the enlisted ranks. This thesis previously examined the recruiting and enlistment of non-conforming community identities, specific to visible minorities and those of the Mormon faith. The parameters of this group within the commemorative context will be slightly changed. In terms of the cenotaph list, the applicable non-conforming groups include visible minorities and individuals who are of Central or Eastern European descent. Mormons are not included with regards to the cenotaph analysis.

Beginning with visible minorities who served who would have met the selection criteria, we note that there are five documented members of non-conforming identities

³⁸ The three artillery officer's whose names appear are Majors Alvin Ripley and Alexander Stafford, as well as Captain Phillip Bawden.

³⁹ The two officers of the 113th from the Lethbridge area were Lieutenants Sydney Thurber (Cardston) and Charles Scaddan (Lethbridge).

who could have been included on the cenotaph. Of these, Kichimatsu Sugimoto and Teiji Suda, both of Japanese descent and from the Raymond area, while George Coming Singer and Albert Mountain Horse were Blood Indians from the Standoff area. The Lethbridge cenotaph does commemorate individuals from conforming identity groups who lived in the same regions as these four men and so there should not have been an issue with including them as well. Perhaps the most obvious omission was that of Pete Provost, a Peigan Indian who lived near Brocket and enlisted with the Lethbridge Highlanders. He was the only visible minority of the 901 member battalion and also earned a Military Medal for bravery in the field. The idea that he was somehow forgotten by the community and his comrades during the compilation process seems unlikely.

In an effort to discover whether Lethbridge was alone in omitting visible minorities from its memorial, an examination of the aforementioned Southwestern Alberta memorials notes that Pincher Creek, like Lethbridge did not include any visible minorities, irrespective of their close proximity to the Peigan reserve and the fact that the 13th Canadian Mounted Rifles, who recruited heavily in the region, had included First Nations members. The Town of Cardston, which lies in close proximity to the Blood reserve, does memorialize the names of the two Blood tribe members who died in the war, as does the monument in Fort Macleod, which is also located near the reserve. The Raymond cenotaph includes the names of both Japanese-Canadian casualties. While it cannot be definitively stated that the Lethbridge cenotaph process was inherently biased against visible minorities, it does harken back to Bloch's contention that the elites worked to further a reconstruction of how the war ought to have been.

The second non-conforming identity group to be examined were those recruits whose ethnicity was rooted in the nations of Central or Eastern Europe. While their

numbers were not substantial within the ranks of the Kilties, they were significant enough to warrant examination, particularly in terms of commemoration. Included in this group were three Montenegrins, one Serb, and one Hungarian. The Hungarian, Herbert Schwartz had falsified his attestation to document his birthplace to be in the United States and his religion as Roman Catholic. The census and immigration records indicate that he was born in Budapest and was of the Jewish faith.⁴⁰ Certainly, his surname would have been an indicator that his ethnicity was likely to be what the locals termed at the time as ‘Slavic.’ Of these five individuals, only two, Steve Solar and Herbert Schwartz were present in the memorial programme, and only Solar’s name actually appeared on the monument. The three Montenegrins, Lazar Adamovich, Paule Puletich, and Vuko Gokich, never appeared on any of the published lists, the memorial programme, or the cenotaph itself. Of the five individuals, Steve Solar’s name was the least ‘Slavic’ sounding name and he is the only one who was included in 1931. A review of the programme indicates that one more individual of Serbian ethnicity is present, but did not appear on the cenotaph. This man, Sabo Stankovitch, served with the Lethbridge Highlanders, but did not die during the war. His name was likely omitted for this reason, however, in a strange twist, his name was added to the memorial during a mid-century refurbishment.⁴¹

The idea that someone who did not die could be included on the memorial is not unusual. Vance recognizes that mistakes and omissions were common in communities across Canada, explaining that “a process that relied on assistance from well-meaning friends or relatives rather than official information was often fraught with

⁴⁰ Clifton, *They Never Came Home*, 250.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 335.

difficulty...Even the best efforts could not guarantee against embarrassing mistakes.”⁴²

An examination of the names on the Lethbridge cenotaph as they stand today, which includes the original names plus any added during expansion and refurbishment efforts, reveals that twenty-nine of 262 names are misspelt and further than eighteen were memorialized prior to their deaths. This figure does not include the five names that remain unidentifiable.

To be fair, not all errors and omissions are solely the responsibility of the cenotaph committee or members of the public who participated in the process. The unavailability and lack of access to official records created obstacles and sometimes the difficulties were furthered by myths perpetuated by the veterans themselves. For example, James Wordie who had served with the Lethbridge Highlanders was one of the individuals who was wrongfully placed on the cenotaph prior to his death. In his book, *The Prairie Boys: Southern Albertans Wartime Experiences*, Garry Allison includes an anecdotal third person account, which maintains that shortly after the cenotaph had been erected, Wordie, who visited the city frequently on business, noticed his name on the cenotaph and subsequently tried for several years to have it removed. According to Allison, Wordie related that “He had been machine-gunned on one of the very last days of the war and had been left in a ditch for dead.” The harrowing tale goes on to document his body being found by Belgians who discovered that he was alive, but without identity disks. Wordie related that he was in a coma for months and during this time, his wife had

⁴² Vance, *Death So Noble*, 117.

been notified that he was dead. It was this telegram that led to his name being included on the cenotaph.⁴³

Assuming that any of this story is correct, it is highly unlikely that Wordie would have been rendered unconscious in 1918, remaining so until 1928 when the cenotaph list was compiled. A review of his personnel records, indicates that the reality was quite different. Wordie did remain overseas in hospital for a few months after the war's end, but he had never been machine gunned and was in fact suffering from acute venereal disease. Regardless, he returned to Canada later in 1919 and it is possible that a version of the tale may have been constructed as a means to explain his hospitalization to his wife and employer.⁴⁴ While Wordie's account may have been understandable at the time, it is interesting to note that the myth was being perpetuated more than eighty years later. It is only through the release of official records that myths such as these can be challenged.

Regardless of the issues with errors, omissions, and myths, the Lethbridge cenotaph stands as a primary reminder of the community's First World War experience. The importance of the memorial to imagined community has grown over time, but it was the seeds sown during the 1931 dedication ceremony that began the process. The dedication of the cenotaph may have begun the process moving forward, but it also served as a tangible ending to the community's collective First World War experience. In the high diction of the day, it was the end of an era.

A review of the official programme indicates that the ceremony was choreographed to present an elaborate display of pious patriotism and community pride,

⁴³ Garry Allison, *The Prairie Boys: Southern Albertans Wartime Experiences* (Lethbridge: Lethbridge Historical Society, 2006), 177.

⁴⁴ Clifton, *They Never Came Home*, 285.

with elements of traditional nationalistic and imperialist values. As the king's representative in Alberta, Lieutenant-Governor Walsh presided over the affair, which included invocations and prayers from no fewer than four branches of various Protestant denominations. Representing the military was Major-General Ormond from Calgary, while other groups who occupied places of honour include the Army and Navy Veterans Association, the Canadian Legion, the local chapters of the IODE, city officials, and children from the various public and separate schools within the city. Local boy scouts were tasked with selling the souvenir programmes, the proceeds from which were to go towards any extra costs incurred during the erection and dedication of the monument. The content of the program included short speeches from the dignitaries and prayers offered by each member of the clergy present. Hymns and patriotic anthems were sung and a local veteran played the Last Post and Reveille.⁴⁵

Many components of the ceremony would later serve as an exemplar for the Armistice Day/Remembrance Day ceremonies that would be held at the cenotaph annually. The most unique part of the itinerary was the official handing over of the monument from the committee to the people of Lethbridge, as represented by Mayor Robert Barrowman. To effect this important transition, the following words were spoken, beginning with Chairman G.E.A. Rice on behalf of the committee: "Your Worship, on behalf of the Committee responsible for the erection of this Memorial, we hand to you our finished work. It is your part, Sir, to accept, in the name of this City of Lethbridge, the care and preservation in perpetuity of this tribute to the undying glory of our Sons and

⁴⁵ Ibid, 16.

Brothers.” Mayor Barrowman responded: “The trust is ours and it shall be kept. God and this people are witness.”⁴⁶

Although the words spoken during the handing over were short and simple, they had great impact in that they symbolized the community’s ownership of its unique First World War experience. Closure is a word that is often used at times such as these, but a better descriptor might be the end of a chapter. By this time, Lethbridge was a well-established community and had solidified its role as the social, economic, and political hub of the region. Historians have debated whether the First World War was the crucible that forged Canada’s national identity, acknowledging that the rifts between the founding nations were far from reconciled. It must be acknowledged, however, that in a country as geographically vast and culturally diverse as Canada, it is crucial to examine and understand the larger First World War experience in both national and regional contexts.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 15-16.

Conclusion

It is the contention of this thesis that the Lethbridge and greater Southwestern Alberta imagined wartime community was transformed by the First World War, particularly in the context of the events of August 1914, the recruitment and enlistment of conforming and non-conforming populations, and in its quest to commemorate its fallen. Also of importance to this transformation was the community's early martial and militia experience; which began with the arrival of the North West Mounted Police and included the Rocky Mountain Rangers, the locals who served during the Boer War, and the raising of the 25th Independent Field Battery and 23rd Alberta Rangers. This thesis further demonstrates that analysis of any First World War experience cannot be undertaken without an understanding of the immediate history of a community. In the case of Lethbridge and area, the competing American and British interests, as well as the resource-based settlement and unique immigration patterns, most certainly shaped the imagined wartime community.

In both the national and regional contexts, the legacy of the First World War experience continues to be the subject of debate and this is certainly the case in Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta. Perhaps the words of Desmond Morton speak best to the impact of the war on Canadians: "There are few aspects of Canadian society that have not been shaped by the wars, from politics to family, from the role of government to the formation of social policy, from the status of women to French-English relations."¹ While this is true in the national level, it is also valid when examining the regional context.

¹ Cook, *Clio's Warriors*, 3.

In terms of the Southwestern Alberta experience, the French-English divide that was prevalent in Central and Eastern Canada was of minimal concern to the citizenry. The other societal aspects, as identified by Morton, were in fact influenced by the events of 1914-1918. The evolving imagined community of a newly settled region was both reflective of and shaped by the greater war experience. Very disparate identity groups were brought together by the shared experiences of war. For example, Jane Gibb Stafford, the first Caucasian woman to settle in the area and Sikski, a Blackfoot woman who was born in the area before the establishment of the city, were bonded in a mother's grief – each having lost a son to the conflict. Shared experiences of this sort were not uncommon and yet the bonds that they forged did not erase the societal divides between conforming and non-conforming identity groups.

Attitudes towards race, class, religion, and nationality remained entrenched, however, the community emerged with a transformed understanding of what it meant to be a citizen of Southwestern Alberta. The commemorative actions of the community may have romanticised, idealised, and sanitised the war experience, but more importantly, it recognised a sense of collective accomplishment and endurance. The military ethos which had assumed a prominent place in the societal structure of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta did not fade following the war's conclusion, as it did in many parts of Canada. As a result, both a cadet and militia presence has remained a continuous part of the fabric of the community in the century since the war's end.

As the body of First World War historiography expands to include similar microstudies devoted to other regions of Canada, it is likely that further opportunities will arise wherein historians will be able to build on this and similar works and advance our understanding of the complex and diverse Canadian First World War experience.

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